The psychology of warrior culture in the post-Roman Frankish kingdoms

Morris O'Connor, Patrick

Awarding institution:
King's College London

The Psychology of Warrior Culture in the Post-Roman Frankish Kingdoms

Patrick Morris O'Connor

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

King's College London

2019

Abstract

Warfare and violence in the post-Roman West have attracted much interest, and historians have used the insights of social anthropology and literary theory to interpret the evidence. To date, however, psychological and behavioural aspects of violence in late antiquity have been relatively neglected. As a result, the question of how 'warrior cultures' consistently produced individuals who were enthusiastic participants in ancient warfare, has not been properly explored.

This thesis explores the warrior culture of the post-Roman Frankish kingdoms, through three sequential phases. First, by reviewing a range of modern literature on the causes and consequences of violence, the shortcomings of present assumptions about violence in this period – which tend to interpret it in strategic terms – are brought into relief. Violence is re-conceived as a uniquely powerful experience with lasting psychological effects on participants, victims and witnesses. And violent behaviour, including participation in warfare, is shown to be an outcome not just of culturally-bounded strategic thinking, but also of psychological and behavioural adaptation that comes about through experience.

Second, the thesis puts the warrior culture of the Frankish kingdoms into historical perspective by looking at the the emergence of the Franks and other military groups of the late-Roman West. This section engages with the debates about the collapse of the Western Empire and the formation of the Frankish kingdoms, focusing on the evidence for violence and warrior subcultures in the fourth and fifth centuries. It is argued that the northern frontier was a hotbed of violent experiences and behavioural profiles, where militant subcultures, stimulated by Roman military activity and demands for manpower, were producing a surfeit of willing fighters prior to the Frankish takeover.

Finally, the largest section of the thesis examines the evidence for the culture of violence in the post-Roman Frankish kingdoms through a detailed analysis of *Lex Salica* and the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours. It is argued that these are

valuable sources of information for understanding the warrior classes and their violence. Through close attention to the language and evaluations of violence in these sources, some aspects of contemporary attitudes and experiences of violence are reconstructed. And the mechanisms by which warriors were psychologically and behaviourally conditioned to embrace the horrors of battle are brought into relief.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

Histories	Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum*, (eds. Krusch & Levison 1951)
Pactus	*Pactus Legis Salicae*, (ed. Ekhardt 1962)
Ammianus	Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, (ed. Rolfe 1950)
Lex.Bur.	*Lex Burgundionum*, (ed. de Salis 1892)
Lex.Vis.	*Lex Visigothorum* (ed. Zeumer 1902)
Ed.Roth.	*Edictum Rothari* (ed. Bluhme 1868)
Leg.Liut.	*Leges Liutprandi* (ed. Bluhme 1868)
Cod.Theo.	*Codex Theodosianus* (ed. Mommsen & Meyer 1905)
Pan.Lat.	*Panegyrici Latini*, (eds. Nixon and Rodgers 1994)
ND	*Notitia Dignitatum* (ed. Böcking 1853)
Vegetius	Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* (ed. Lang 1869)
Zosimus	Zosimus, *Historia Nova* (trans. Anonymous 1814)
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
SRM	*Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*
AHR	*American Historical Review*

General Introduction

> "All arts and all works progress through daily practice and continual exercise... Even to this day the barbarians think this art alone deserves their attention... For those who have not for a long time, or never at all, seen men being wounded or killed are greatly shocked when they first catch sight of it, and confused by panic start thinking of flight instead of fighting."[1]
>
> - Vegetius, *De Re Militari*, c. 400 A.D.

War – the 'art' of killing and forcibly subduing humans *en masse* – is a difficult business, and even more than in the modern world, ancient warfare could be an intimately and horrifically visceral experience.[2] As Vegetius so lucidly explained, the difficulties entailed are not merely practical but psychological in nature, and the kind of 'practice' required to overcome such psychological difficulties cannot be reduced to dry, repetitive, technical exercise. In his opinion, competent warriors were also the outcome of a process of what modern psychologists might refer to as 'conditioning'.

While many of Vegetius's claims are questionable, this one has proven to be well-founded, being confirmed and elaborated in recent generations by field research into violence in all kinds of contexts. And it calls our attention to two axioms which will underpin the present thesis: First, in any period, the treatment of soldiers as mere automatons at the disposal of their commanders, or of an army as a 'military machine'[3] which seems to act merely as an extension of the personal ambitions and proclivities of its leader, is inadvisably reductive.[4] And second, psychological preparation for the battlefield comes about as much or more through prior experiences of violence as it does through regular training or discipline.

---

1 Milner, N. P. (trans.), *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science*, (Liverpool 1993), III.10 [p. 86-8]

2 Grossman, D. *On killing: the psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society*, (Boston 1996); Van Wees, H. *Greek Warfare: myths and realities*, (London 2004)

3 Contamine, P. (trans. M. Jones), *War in the Middle Ages*, (Oxford 1984), p. 23

4 Keegan, *The face of battle* (1976), p. 35-50. See Chapter 1, p. 29-30

Thus even the Roman empire, with its elaborate system of supply, reward and punishment, could not guarantee the efficacy of its soldiers in the field, and sought to compensate by recruiting bolder and more aggressive recruits from its frontier provinces and beyond the empire, who participated in what historians have sometimes referred to as 'warrior cultures'.[5] It was widely accepted, without question, that these wild people were 'fecund' sources of a product that the empire always needed, but struggled to manufacture, even with all the powers at its disposal: men who were eager for war.[6] And as the Western empire waned, it was replaced by less sophisticated kingdoms which were, if anything, even more militarily reliant on the 'natural' aggression of their *gentes*.

But the mechanisms by which this 'fecundity' was achieved have remained obscure. Would not the barbarians, who lacked regular centralized systems of pay, supply and discipline, have been much less able to produce the qualities necessary to withstand the psychological pressures of the battlefield? This is the central question which this thesis will investigate: how and why did those peoples relied upon by the Western empire, and whose warrior-elites eventually took over its territories, undertake the 'practice' entailed in the production of such a plentiful supply of eager fighters? Or, to put it another way, how did the social aspect of the late- and post-Roman 'war system' actually work? To answer that question, we will open up the concept of military preparation to include not just official training, but also less formal experiences of violence, including those that take place in the course of social and political life.

Many historians have been content to take for granted the capacity of the barbarian tribes, and the kingdoms that they established, to produce a ready supply of willing warriors, or otherwise explain it in somewhat reductive terms.

5 This term has been used in several senses but remains somewhat vaguely defined in many instances – see for instance, Geary, P. "Barbarians and Ethnicity", in G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown & O. Grabar (eds.), *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, (London 1999), p. 122; Anderson Jr, T. "Roman military colonies in Gaul, Salian Ethnogenesis and the forgotten meaning of *Pactus Legis Salicae*", in J. France & K. Devries, (eds.) *Warfare in the Dark Ages* (2017). In this thesis the term is not supposed to connote heroic literature, as some historians have done in the past, but merely denotes a sub-culture that produces an inordinate proportion of individuals who are psychologically willing and able to participate in collective violence, or the practices by which this production is achieved.

6 Nazarius, Panegyric of Constantine (c. 321), 17, in Nixon, C. E. V. and Rodgers, B. S. *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (Berkeley 1994)

But a growing body of research into modern industrial and pre-industrial violent subcultures has not found the question so simple.[7] This modern research adopts a variety of theoretical approaches, and owes much to detailed observations of violent behaviour in practice. Studies into military and criminal violence have revealed a multi-faceted phenomenon which regularly fails to conform to monolithic explanations. And psychological research into aggression, focusing on underlying neural processes, has suggested a combination of biological and social bases for violent behaviour. The present thesis will seek to explore the social production of violent behaviour and 'warlikeness' among the elites of the early Frankish kingdoms, by bringing a range of such hitherto neglected modern research into the social generation of violence to bear upon contemporary evidence.

Employing heuristic tools from modern research better to understand historical violence is not entirely without precedent in historical work on the early middle ages. John Michael Wallace-Hadrill, considering the social conflicts of the early Franks, made use of anthropological models derived from analyses of 'feuding' societies of the present day.[8] However, his work, like that of many other historians, remained deeply informed by popular conceptions of violence as essentially innate, primal, and 'pneumatic'[9] - an assumption which seemed to challenge the historian not to explain why violence happened, but rather why it did not happen. Thus Wallace-Hadrill's influential analyses of the Frankish feuding culture concluded that "Such evidence as we have of these [feuds] by no means suggests that the Germans took to fighting between families as a desirable occupation and a *proper outlet for bellicose instincts*. Rather the opposite."[10] In short, he remained more interested in the social limitation of violence than the social construction of 'bellicose instincts', and did not explore the relationship

7 See below, and Chapter 1.

8 "The Bloodfeud of the Franks", in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 41:2 (1959), p. 459-487. His main source of inspiration was Max Gluckman's *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (Oxford 1963 [1955]). See also, Wood, I. "'The Bloodfeud of the Franks': a historiographical legend", in *Early medieval Europe* vol. 14 iss.4 (2006), pp. 489-504; White, S. D. "Peace in the feud revisited: feuds in the peace in medieval European feuds", in K. Cooper & C. Leyser (eds.), *Making early medieval societies: Conflict and belonging in the Latin West, 300-1200* (Cambridge 2016).

9 Cf. Rosenwein 1998, p. 234-5

10 Wallace-Hadrill, J. M. "War and peace in the middle ages", in J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Medieval History*, (Oxford 1975), p. 22 [my emphasis]

between the ‘feuding’ culture and the militarization of elite society. Wallace-Hadrill’s astute observation – that Gallo-Romans were also apparently involved in bitter and violent ‘feuds’ – did not lead to a corresponding interest in how such a scenario came about, and despite a passing acknowledgement that the post-Roman warrior classes must have been “trained for the mysteries of battle”,[11] no thought was given to the question of how social experiences might have contributed to these processes.

Some influential military considerations of Roman and post-Roman warfare, despite also being influenced by ideas of innate violence, and without seeking to explore the question in much detail, nonetheless showed greater awareness of the psychological rigours of battle and the sociological aspects of preparation for war. Ardant du Picq asserted that “Absolute bravery, which does not refuse battle even on unequal terms...is not natural in man; it is the result of moral culture.”[12] J. F. Verbruggen referred to the “private warfare” of the early middle ages as a form of “collective training” for larger-scale conflicts, adding that “Besides, if a people is warlike by nature, characteristics of daily life [i.e. mundane non-military violence] may compensate for many other qualities which in an army of more civilized folk would have to be artificially fostered by long drilling under strict discipline, as in the case of the Romans.”[13] This quote is illustrative of one line of reasoning about barbarian warriors in particular, which Verbruggen inherited in part from Roman authors, according to which the violence of relatively ordinary social life contributes to military inclination and competence, and vice-versa. To use the language of Pierre Bourdieu, violence is understood as a kind of *habitus* made socially normal by a conditioning process embedded both in warfare, and in relatively ordinary social discourse.[14]

---

11 Ibid, p. 24

12 Du Picq, A. *Battle Studies* (1921), ch. 6

13 Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe during the middle ages: from the eighth century to 1340*, (1997 [1954]), p. 63

14 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (1990), p. 52-5. Such an interpretation is also adduced by Keegan (1976, p. 96), in considering the motivation of soldiers at the battle of Agincourt in light of the violent tenor of later medieval social life - “...the commonplace character of violence [meant that] the victim of assault...was likely to have been a good deal less surprised by it when it occurred… Thus battle, though on the extreme spectrum of experience, was not something unimaginable, something wholly beyond the peace-loving individual’s ken.”

To date, however, in seeking to account for Frankish military inclination and competence, and for post Roman violence in general, historians have usually approached the problem from other directions. Some treatments have fairly emphasised the difficulty of imagining very large armies, given the practical problems of supply and organization,[15] and the epistemological basis of seeing post-Roman societies as unusually violent has been fairly called into question.[16] Other studies have postulated a continuity of sophisticated Roman methods of military organization into the post-Roman period, which only ended with the dissolution of the Carolingian empire.[17] But this notion of bureaucratic and disciplinary continuity lacks support in contemporary evidence, suffering from a tendency to rely on inference from earlier and later sources.[18] The social production of violence, and its psychological aspects, have remained peripheral to historical investigations touching upon the subject.

General studies taking on the theme of violence tend to focus on institutional and military dimensions of the issue, although recent work has placed more emphasis on the social implications of war and militarization.[19] The theme of violence also appears in a number of treatments of the early middle ages focusing on other aspects of the period, such as anger and other emotions,[20] revenge,[21] and religion[22]. Violence is particularly prominent in discussions

15 Reuter, "Carolingian and Ottonian Warfare", in M. Keen (ed.), *Medieval Warfare: A History* (Oxford 1999), p. 13-35

16 For instance in Delbruck, H. *Numbers in History* (1913); Goffart, W. "Rome, Constantinople and the barbarians", in *AHR* 86 (1981); Zimmerman, M. "Violence in Late Antiquity Reconsidered", in H. A. Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices* (2006), p. 343-358

17 Bachrach, B. S. *Merovingian Military Organization* (Miinesota 1972); Durliat, J. *Les rentiers de l'impôt: recherches sur les finances municipales dans la Pars Orientis au IVe siècle* (Vienna 1993); Goffart, W. "Frankish military duty and the fate of Roman taxation", in EME 16:2 (May 2008)

18 Bachrach 1972. For a brief but trenchant criticism of his conclusions on Roman continuity, see Gaier, C. Review of *Merovongian military organisation, 481-751*, in *Speculum* 49:3 (1974), p. 549-551. See Chapters 2-3.

19 Shaw, B. D. "War and Violence", in Bowersock, G. W., Brown, P. & Grabar, O. *Late Antiquity: A guide to the postclassical world* (1999); Whitby, "Armies and society", in Cameron, A., Ward-Perkins, B. & Whitby, M. (eds.) *The Cambridge ancient history volume 14: Late Antiquity: Empire and successors, AD 425-600* (Cambridge 2001); Halsall, G. *Warfare and Society in the barbarian West, 450-900*, (London 2003); Bispham, E. "Warfare and the army" in Bispham, E. (ed.) *Roman Europe* (Oxford 2008)

20 Rosenwein (ed.), *Anger's Past: The social uses of emotion in the middle ages* (Ithaca 1998)

21 Throop, A. & Hyams, P. R. (eds.), *Vengeance in the middle ages: emotion, religion and feud*, (Farnham 2010)

22 Rosenwein, B. H. & Little, L. K. "Social meaning in the monastic and mendicant spiritualities", in *Past and Present* 64 (1974); Smith, K. A. *War and the making of medieval*

focusing on the question of barbarian 'ethnogenesis', in which the nature of the military origins and identities of the *gentes* has often been a central to the debate.[23] The relationship between violence and ethnic identity is universally agreed to be one of profound importance, but its extent and implications remain controversial. These are associated with vigorous debates around the degree of militarization, the seriousness of warfare, and the seriousness of destruction in the fourth- and fifth-century empire.[24] The previously popular impression of catastrophic collapse, and in particular the narrative accounts from which it is partially derived, have been challenged in the last generation as a potential exaggeration or distortion of a process that may have been characterized by a much greater degree of relatively peaceful accommodation than was previously assumed.[25] The most balanced conclusions have acknowledged the wide range of possible positions on the extent of violence permitted by the sources.[26] Christianization has often been thought of as broadly antithetical to violence and militarization.[27] But more recent work has tended to reject the most irenic interpretations of Christianity in relation to violence, emphasising the cultural influence of warfare, and adaptation of Christian culture to accommodate warriors, as well as their values and practices.[28]

---

monastic culture (Woodbridge 2011)

23 For instance in Halsall, "Social identities..." 1998; Geary 1999; Heather, P. J. "Ethnicity, group identity, and social status in the migration period", in Garipzanof, I. H., Geary, P. & Urbanczyk, P. (eds.), *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: identities and state formation in early medieval Europe* (Turnhout 2008)

24 For instance in Wightman, E. M. *Gallia Belgica*, (Manchester 1985); See the bibliography provided by Sarti, L. *Perceiving war and the military in early Christian Gaul (ca. 400-700 A.D.)* (Leiden 2013), p. 208. For an eastern Roman comparison, see Whately, C. "Militarization, or the rise of a distinct military culture? The east Roman ruling elite in the 6th century AD" (2013)

25 Kulikowski, M. "Nation versus army: a necessary contrast?", in Gillett, A. (ed.) *On Barbarian identity*, (Turnhout, 2002); Goffart, W. *Barbarian Tides*, (Philadelphia 2006); Lewit, T. "Vanishing Villas: What happened to elite rural habitation in the 5th-6th century?", in *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 16 (2003)

26 For instance, Pohl, W. "Perceptions of Barbarian Violence", in H. A. Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices* (Hampshire 2006), p. 24-26

27 Gibbon, *The history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, (1776-8), ch. 38; Erdmann, C. *The origin of the idea of Crusade* (Princeton 1977) [1935]

28 France, J. "Holy war and holy men: Erdmann and the lives of saints", in M. Bull & N. Housley (ed.), *The experience of Crusading: Western approaches* (Cambridge 2003); Smith 2011; Sarti 2013

Extensive considerations of military motivation among the warriors of the Frankish kingdoms at the level of the individual are few,[29] and Timothy Reuter's reflections on the economic motives behind Carolingian warfare remain a relatively isolated effort.[30] As Lauri Sarti states in a recent and welcome extensive treatment of post-Roman warrior culture, "The question that has only been marginally touched upon until now and that needs further investigation is what motivated men to initiate or actively participate in an armed undertaking." Sarti's monograph on the warrior classes of Gaul shows an unprecedented degree of concern for "the intensity of the contemporary experience of violence"[31], which is perhaps indicative of a growing public awareness of the psychological repercussions of experiences of violence. But her evident interest in physiological and psychological aspects of experiences of violence – which finds parallels in other recent work on the subject[32] – is not matched by a concomitant effort to establish a theoretical position on these aspects. As a result her conclusions on motivation retain the conventional over-emphasis on the image of violence as a means to various ends – usually material gain and social prestige – rather than a complex phenomenon with diverse and intricate causes. Influential approaches to post-Roman warfare and social conflict by Guy Halsall, Timothy Reuter, Walter Pohl and Paul Fouracre have similarly been united in making assumptions about the causes of violence which tend to reduce the issue to the pursuit of wealth and reputation.[33]

But a considerable body of modern evidence suggests that such assumptions – which have been broadly labelled 'strategic' – are inadequate for explaining many aspects of violence in both social and military settings. A primary aim of this thesis is to clearly identify and critique the reductive assumptions about violence that have hitherto underpinned so much of the research into Late

29 Sarti (2013), p. 192-3
30 "Plunder and tribute in the Carolingian empire" [1985]; "The end of Carolingian military expansion" [1990] both in Rueter, T. *Medieval polities and modern mentalities*, (Cambridge 2006)
31 Sarti 2013, p. xiii, 4, 9-10, etc
32 For instance Hyams, P. R. "Neither unnatural nor wholly negative: The future of medieval vengeance", in Throop, A. & Hyams, P. R. (eds.) (2010)
33 Halsall (1998); Reuter (1988), (1990); Fouracre (1998); Pohl (2006). See Chapter 1.

Antique and Early Medieval warfare and society, in order to establish a revised field of assumptions about the causes and implications of violence at a personal as well as a political level – in particular their under-appreciated psychological and physiological aspects. This psychologically informed conception of violence will bring into relief the importance of the experience of violence in conditioning human psychology and behaviour, and raise the related question of the role of violence in the development of societies. It will then be suggested that the societies of the late- and post-Roman West are particularly strong candidates for a case study of the role of violence in social and political development.

Having established a firmer theoretical basis through this consideration of the literature on the causes and consequences of violence, the thesis will investigate the relationship of social life to military enthusiasm among the inhabitants of Northern Gaul and Germany – the territory that became the Frankish kingdoms – in the period c. 350-600. In doing so it will also seek to contribute to the debates surrounding militarization and social identity within the late empire and the early barbarian kingdoms. The reason for the selection of this region is the strong combination of late- and post-Roman legal and narrative material it offers, in particular the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours, for which nothing comparable is available regarding the other barbarian groups that took over the former empire.

Thus, the historical sources considered in the greatest detail will be those that seem to bring us closest to the subculture and experience of warriors in the post-Roman Frankish kingdoms: the provisions of the earliest Frankish law-code, the *Pactus Legis Salicae*; and the narrative accounts of Gregory of Tours' *Histories*.[34] The utility of these two sources for the study of Frankish society has been criticised, and will be considered in detail in due course, but the most basic justification for their use is that they are among the few texts which present the post-Roman military elites as individuals and small groups rather than an

34 Ekhardt, K. A. (ed.), *Pactus Legis Salicae. Monumenta Germania Historica, Legum Sectio I, Leges Nationum Germanicarum*, Vol. IV, Part 1 (Hanover 1962); Hessels, J. H. (ed.), *Lex Salica: The ten Texts with the Glosses, and the Lex Emendata*, (London 1880); translations adapted from Drew, K. F. *The Laws of the Salian Franks* (1991). Krusch, B & Levison, W. (eds.), *Gregorii episcopi Turonensis. Libri Historiarum X*, in *MGH SRM* I.1 (Hannover 1951)

undifferentiated mass, and this important perspective remains drastically under-represented both in ancient and modern historiography.[35]

It is important to state at the outset that the present thesis will treat violence not merely as something which is described, constructed, contested and evaluated in (particularly literary) culture, but as a real and immediate physical phenomenon with an objective existence outside the texts through which we learn about it.[36] This is not at all to deny that violence is a historical product, which takes on different forms in different times and places, or that the valuations and meanings attached to it do not differ significantly between one culture and another.[37] But a central argument here will be that there are certain tendencies in terms of the causes and outcomes of physical attacks which retain a degree of consistency across cultures and historical epochs; that the human experience of physical violence, while clearly different in different cultures, is limited in its plasticity.[38] And that we therefore can and should seek to establish its more generic aspects for the purposes of historical investigation, and cautiously employ the insights of modern research – not just anthropology but also neuroscience,[39] psychology and criminology – in considering post-Roman violence.

Thus we will seek not only to get more out of the historical sources, but also to interpret them in light of relevant modern information on the causes and implications of violence. As will become clear, this will not be an attempt to reassert a conception of violence as innate, or of a 'civilizing process' understood as a progressive movement toward social control over naturally violent tendencies, but rather the opposite. Violence will be conceived as a social product, which the late- and post-Roman context produced in unique ways. What we *will* seek to do to, however, is to recapture something of the capacity of

35 For instance in Shaw, "War and violence" (1999); Halsall, G. *Warfare and Society in the barbarian West, 450-900*, (London 2003)

36 Cf. Hyams 2010, p. 211-212

37 Zimmerman 2006, p. 343-4

38 Cf. Reddy, W. M. "Against Constructionism: the historical ethnography of emotions", in *Current Anthropology* 38:3 (1997); Pampler, J. "The history of emotions: an interview with Willaim Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns", in *History and Theory* 49 (May 2010)

39 As suggested in Hyams 2010, p. 219

violence for apparent irrationality and arbitrariness, by including the mechanics of involuntary physiological response and adaptation in seeking to account for it. This will challenge the presently popular picture of violence in the late and post-Roman West as emerging principally from strategic thinking and cultural norms. It will also bring into relief the full extent and implications of the relationship between military participation and relatively ordinary social violence.

The thesis will thus elaborate a conception of sixth-century Frankish society in which violent behaviour was produced through culturally conditioned psychological developments in response to prior experiences of violence. It will sketch the social system by which violence might have been systematically – though not necessarily deliberately or 'rationally' – reproduced and perpetuated by physiological and psychological means, resulting in a 'cycle of violence' whereby warfare fuelled social violence and vice-versa.

Chapter 1 comprises a wide-ranging discussion of the relationship of biological and psychological response and development, at the level of individuals and small groups, to violence, reviewing work done in a range of modern academic disciplines. A preliminary historiographical discussion will consider the currently popular, though little debated, assumptions about how violence comes about, and question how successful they are in accounting for the phenomenon. The relevance of modern research on violence to the post-Roman warrior culture will be discussed, resulting in a new set of paradigmatic perspectives which complement and modify the existing canon of explanatory factors normally available to historians – innate inclinations, cultural imperatives, and strategic decisions – by adding several new aspects to our understanding of why violence happens, in particular (mal)adaptive behavioural change derived from experience.

This discussion will seek to go beyond the crude binary opposition between competing images of violence as an inevitable outcome of innate 'pneumatic' drives and emotions, and violence as purely strategically and culturally constructed, developing a more complicated and dialectical conception of its historical causes and implications. A number of innovative perspectives on the

source material will be developed, the most fundamental of which will be the interconnectedness of violence in different social contexts, particularly in bureaucratically unsophisticated societies. This revised set of assumptions about the causes and implications of violence, in general and specifically in the post-Roman context, will tend to emphasise its capacity for self-reproduction and self-propagation by physiological and psychological means, and the necessity of viewing warfare as both a contributory cause and a partial product of local social violence.

Having considered the evidence for the causes and implications of violence emerging from modern research on humans in a range of industrial and pre-industrial contexts, the thesis will turn to the much-discussed question of the violence associated with the end of Roman power in the West. The second and third chapters will consider the military experiences and development of northern Gaul and the frontier in the fourth and fifth centuries, and the dissolution of Roman rule, in order to contextualise the warrior culture of the post-Roman Frankish kingdoms. Although most historians agree that the end of the western Roman empire was characterised by serious and frequent warfare, some are not convinced by the dire picture painted by the Roman and post-Roman narrators of the period.[40] This section will focus on the historiographical debate about the seriousness of warfare and the extent of militarization on both sides of the frontier, referring to archaeological as well as literary evidence. It will also focus on the question of 'barbarization' of Roman military and political culture, considering the debates about the extent of barbarian migration, the possible adoption of non-Roman or not-entirely-Roman identities west of the Rhine, and the extent and nature of integration between incoming and existing groups.

Chapter 2 considers a range of evidence – narrative, archaeological and legal – for the late-third and fourth century development of the Franks and the regions that they would eventually occupy, with special attention to the detailed accounts of Roman military activity provided by Ammianus Marcelinus. It will be argued

40 Goffart, W. "Rome, Constantinople, and the Barbarians", in *AHR* 1981; cf. Gillett (2002), p. 13-15

that there is strong archaeological as well as written evidence that the period was marked by physical insecurity and cultural change, especially in the regions between the Rhine and the Garonne. And evidence will be presented that implies that the regions in question were culturally disposed to produce an abundant supply of willing military recruits. The picture of a relationship between military violence and social development, reflected upon generally in the first chapter, will be considered in greater detail through the late-Roman evidence.

Chapter 3 evaluates the Frankish takeover of Gaul in the fifth and early sixth centuries in a similar vein, using a range of evidence to consider the nature and extent of the violence and social change entailed in the process. It will be argued that the collapse of the Western empire and the Frankish takeover of Gaul were attended by considerable physical and social upheavals, and that the rulers of the Frankish kingdoms inherited only the vestiges of the Roman governmental and military infrastructure. But it will also be argued that the cultural interaction and convergence of the societies either side of the Rhine facilitated an exceptionally effective synthesis between the incoming warrior elites and the military subcultures of Gaul, which contributed both to the expansion and relative stability of the new political and social order.

The final section turns to the central investigation into the 'warrior culture' – or, more accurately, the violent subculture – which the elites of the post-Roman Frankish kingdoms and their followers participated in during the sixth century. This is based on a detailed analysis of the references to violence in *Lex Salica* and Gregory of Tours' *Histories*, through the prism of the understanding of violent subcultures deduced in Chapter 1. This psychological perspective will bring the utility of these sources for the understanding of contemporary violence – which has been the subject of considerable debate – into relief. These Chapters, drawing on the conclusions of Chapter 1, will set out to show that the *Laws* and *Histories* hint at a sub-culture in which enthusiasm and readiness for war were associated with the relative normality and frequency of (mostly non-lethal) violence in times of 'peace'.

Chapter 4 argues, as some other historians have done recently, that the laws are a more valuable source for contemporary violence than has often been averred, offering a unique perspective on the social habits and values of the communities who the laws were supposed to serve.[41] The configuration of values placed on various violent acts, and their relationship to those placed on other offences, will be examined in detail. And by comparing the *Pactus Legis Salicae* with other near-contemporary laws on violence, in particular the Burgundian and Visigothic codes, this section evaluates the specific place of violence in Frankish culture relative to competing kingdoms and identities, and the particular incentives offered by the laws to the elite warriors who upheld the Frankish kingdoms. It will be argued that the Frankish laws on violence should be regarded not merely as a crude propaganda effort loosely based on Roman models, but as a sophisticated (re-)construction of conditions of relative justification and legitimacy which may provide important clues as to the character of elite society in post-Roman Gaul. It will further be suggested that the laws of the Franks, and the *habitus* which they implied, systematically encouraged violent 'self-help' in a range of scenarios, particularly in hierarchical contexts.

Chapter 5 looks again at the evidence for social violence provided by Gregory of Tours, arguing against the influential contention that the caricatured and partial picture of elite social life provided by Gregory should be dismissed as a literary fiction aimed at the moral edification of a primarily Gallo-Roman audience.[42] The biases and ambiguities of Gregory's moral positioning are considered in light of his political and social situation, highlighting the ambivalence of his attitude to violence and his frequent reticence on the subject. It will be argued that while the evidence of the *Histories* must be treated with caution and attention to their author's frequently intimate relationships to their protagonists, they comprise a uniquely valuable source for the study of the contemporary warrior elite and their followers.

41 For instance, Lambert, T. "Theft, homicide and crime in late Anglo-Saxon law", in *Past & Present* 214 (2012), p. 3-43; Brown, W. C. *Violence in Medieval Europe* (New York 2011), p. 47-60. See Chapter 4.

42 Goffart, W. *The narrators of barbarian history* (Princeton 1988). See Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 explores the language of the *Histories*, and the incidents and individuals to whom it refers, in greater detail. A preliminary discussion, looking at the level of political violence and disorder implied by the *Histories*, is followed by an extensive review of the nomenclature of violence and violent individuals – *interficere*, *caedere*, *viri*, *pueri*, etc – which will consider the significance of these terms in relation to the contexts in which they occur. It is argued that Gregory's use of language implies that non-lethal violence was relatively ordinary, and that violence was tacitly expected and even mandated in a wide range of scenarios. A final, supplementary section will reconsider some of the biographies provided by Gregory through the lens of violent socialization and its psychological consequences. This discussion will open up the possibility that the sometimes irrational and self-destructive acts of violence related by Gregory can be interpreted as outcomes of violent socialization, which may be instructive in understanding the nature of the *Histories*' audience and Gregory's didactic intentions. And it will be suggested that the individuals excoriated by Gregory were not cartoon characters, whose deeds are calculated to evoke automatic outrage, but all-too-realistic stereotypes exaggerated and condemned as a warning to Gregory's patrons and contemporaries.

The overall aim of the thesis is twofold: First, to add to the understanding of post-Roman Gaul, by effectively using modern knowledge to think about the cross-cultural causes and implications of violence, and how they functioned in this context. Second, to contribute to the body of modern knowledge about violence, by teasing out the implications of the specific factors of violent socialization in late- and post-Roman Gaul, which have much to tell us both as a comparative case study and as an important cultural ancestor of the modern world.

Chapter 1: Violence, Medieval and Modern

> "…the village priest sent one of his boys [*pueri*] to invite some of the men to come and have a drink in his house. When the boy arrived, one of those who were invited drew his sword and did not fear to hit him. He fell down dead."[43]
>
> - Gregory of Tours

This scene, the opening episode of a much-discussed Tours 'feud' which eventually claimed the lives of three freemen, as well as an unknown quantity of slaves and *pueri*, provides a good platform for thinking about several aspects of elite violence in post-Roman Francia. The most immediately striking aspect of the scene is its apparent senselessness – whereas the other episodes in the conflict are contextualized by prior offences, this incident, from which all the others in the famous sequence descend, seems to be an attack out of the blue. Gregory himself, inevitably more concerned with the high-status individuals drawn into conflict by the incident, provides only the most cursory and cryptic of non-explanations – the anonymous attacker "did not fear to hit him". But why did he *want* to hit him? Of course, in this specific case, we will never know, for there is no real hope of finding more detailed corroborating evidence, but historians have remained remarkably content not to think about how such apparently senseless acts of violence as this could come about as a product of historical processes. This is all the more remarkable when we reflect on the fact that this incident is only the most obvious case of what seems like a consistent trend of unnecessary and inordinate violence in Gregory's narrative.[44]

Until the later twentieth century, there did not seem to any need to explain such apparently spontaneous outbursts, for there was broad academic consensus on the elemental and innate violence of the barbarians, and indeed of humanity as a whole, in the absence of powerful systems of social control.[45] Marc Bloch

43 Gregory of Tours, *Histories* VII.47

44 This point will be considered at length in Chapters 5-6.

45 Gibbon, E. *The history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, 1776-8, ch. 38; Freud, S. *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. and ed., James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), pp. 58-63 etc

famously referred to "...the emotional instability so characteristic of the feudal era...The despairs, the rages, the impulsive acts, the sudden revulsions of feeling" which "present great difficulties to historians, who are instinctively disposed to reconstruct the past in terms of the rational."[46] Since that time the image of early medieval violence as caused by 'rages' and 'impulsive acts' has fallen from favour. Conclusions like Bloch's were viewed as too deeply entwined with scientifically unsound and politically unsafe discourses which opposed the image of primitive violence to a mythical civilized and sophisticated peace that was seen to be epitomized by modern western regimes.[47] This rejection of previous consensus was, at times, characterized by a certain defensiveness about early medieval violence, as historians sought to clear the period of the still common perception that it was characterized by "mindless macho thuggery".[48] Attention has turned to explanations of violence which focus on self-interest – particularly the political ambitions of leaders – and cultural demands and permissions. But perhaps the baby was thrown out with the bathwater, so to speak, for the irrational image of motivation conceived by Bloch was based not so much on assumptions of innate violence, but more on the idea of human psychology developing in response to physical conditions of life, which in this case included frequent wars and other natural disasters. He insisted that "...the irrational is an important element in *all* history and only a sort of false shame could allow its effects on the course of political events in feudal Europe to be passed over in silence." Although the links that he envisaged were in many cases *ad hoc* and unconvincing[49] the basic point was well made. The objective of this chapter is to once again place the psychological aspects of violence centre stage, and to explore the threads that connect 'irrational' and 'rational', 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' violence together.

46 Bloch, M. *Feudal society, Volume 1: The growth of ties of dependence* (London 1961) , p. 72-3

47 Cf. Riches, D. Introduction, in D. Riches (ed.), *The Anthropology of Violence* (Oxford 1986)

48 Halsall, G. "Reflections on Early Medieval violence: the example of the 'blood-feud'", in *Memoria y Civilisacion* 2:1 (1999); Wood, I. "'The Bloodfeud of the Franks': a historiographical legend", in *Early medieval Europe* vol. 14 iss.4 (2006), p.493-4

49 For instance, such statements as "A low standard of hygiene doubtless also contributed to this nervous sensibility..." – Bloch (1961), p. 74

This objective is linked to a corresponding *a priori* observation about the post-Roman military establishment: in a time when large-scale warfare was so dependent on the basic expedient of fighting with swords and other weapons, people as willing to fight (for such uncertain and dubious rewards,) as those portrayed in the Sichar affair, might be considerable assets to the royal army. In particular, someone as willing to draw his sword and strike without warning as the anonymous attacker portrayed above might be an especially useful person, even a leader of men, 'showing them how it's done'.[50] This is especially true for the post-Roman hosts, who were short on regular discipline, pay or training to motivate them or hold them together. And such unhesitant fighters are not produced merely by material and cultural incentives and permissions, but also by experiences of violence, re-iterated over time, and culturally encouraged and endorsed, so as to create permanent physiological and psychological changes in their participants.

1.1 – Present assumptions and their limitations

As mentioned, present historiography has left behind the kind of reductive accounts of violence which see it as originating in the secret and savage nature of mankind. The post-war academic environment in the humanities was pervaded both by doubts about modernist claims of historical progress and other grand meta-narratives, and a related tendency toward heightened epistemological scepticism. Claims of historians to scientific knowledge were compellingly attacked from a number of directions, including Karl Popper's "critical rationalism" and Michel Foucault's "archaeology of knowledge", and many historians were increasingly estranged from the experimental and observational sciences, whose methods were deprived of their air of objectivity.[51] 'Scientific' deductions based on laboratory experiments were understandably deemed to be inapplicable to historical source material, and even (by some theorists) to their own subject-matter, as the artificial detachment of such experiments from real

50 See below, note 67-8, 85.

51 Foucault, M. (trans. S. Hand), *The archaeology of knowledge* (London 2002 [1969]); Popper, K. *The open society and its enemies* [II Vols.] (London 2008 [1945]). Cf. Kuhn, T. S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago 1970)

social settings was called into question.[52] Instead, historical investigation was increasingly informed by newly emerging disciplines of critical theory and cultural anthropology. There has been a great movement toward historicisation of every concept previously taken for granted by historians,[53] and among these 'violence' was of particular significance due to its powerful resonance and use as a justification for imperialist discourses. Historians have both drawn upon and contributed considerably to these directions of research, often with interesting and informative results.[54]

Present historical work on the experience of early medieval warriors is decidedly socially constructivist, in that it tends to see perceptions and manifestations of violence as extending from the always unique cultural interpretations of contemporary society, and therefore not susceptible to analysis according to overarching and cross-culturally applicable principles.[55] There is a laudable desire to see historical cultures, and the experiences and feelings of people within those cultures, without preconceptions derived from modern examples. But as Walter Pohl has warned, underlying assumptions are very difficult to avoid, and attempts "to 'take evidence at its own terms' easily leads to the use of a theoretical model all the same"[56]. In this the study of violence is no exception; on the contrary, it may indeed epitomise this problem. Thus in talking about actual physical violence, while reductive biological explanations have been rejected, another, and in some ways even more traditional, line of reductive reasoning has remained popular. This line of reasoning, supported by

52 Gergen, "Social psychology as social construction: the emerging vision", in McGarty, C. & Haslam, A. (eds.) *The message of social psychology: Perspectives on mind in society*, (Oxford 1996), i.e. at p.7 – "Not only is the subject matter itself a social construction, thus not subject to empirical evaluation outside a particular tradition of interpretation, but such research represents the arrogation of a uniquely western ontology of the mind to the status of the universal."

53 See Rheinberger, H.-J. *On Historicizing Epistemology: An essay* (Palo Alto 2010)

54 For instance, White, S. D. "The politics of Anger", in Rosenwein (ed.), *Anger's Past*, (1998); and more generally, Miller, W. I. "Getting a fix on violence", in *Humiliation and other essays on honour, social discomfort, and violence* (Ithaca 1993), pp. 52-92. This lucid discussion parallels the concerns of my own thesis in some respects, and is a good example of how the same topics may be handled in a more dedicatedly constructivist way, as well as (in my opinion) the limitations implicit in such a perspective.

55 Airlie, S. "The history of emotions and emotional history", in *Early Medieval Europe*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2001), p. 235-6

56 Pohl, W. "Ethnicity, theory, and tradition: a response", in A. Gillett ed., *On Barbarian Identity* (Turnhout 2002), p. 238-9

the influential musings of Hobbes, Marx, Machiavelli, Clausewitz, and more recently proponents of 'rational choice theory' and 'game theory', views violence not as the product of violent human natures per se, but rather as a result of the universal social tendency to compete over finite resources.[57] In identifying the importance of 'cultural capital' in addition to actual material resources, and their close interrelationship, Bourdieu extended this principle to forms of competition which may not be readily comprehensible to the culturally uninformed mind.[58] But the basic logic remains the same: human ambitions clash, and violence is an inevitable outcome of those clashes. The surmises on offer in two recent collections of articles directly taking on the theme of early medieval violence are illustrative of this attitude (my emphases) –

> "Wars were undertaken *to provide the booty* so essential to early medieval politics (Reuter 1985; Reuter 1990 for the consequences of failing to take plunder), to provide opportunities to demonstrate valour or military prowess, and thus *obtain rewards*, and to display the military ability of the leader to his followers (and potential rivals). This was a kind of '*tension release*'."[59]

> "Violence arose *from ruthless competition* between potentes as they tried to gain for themselves the greatest amount of material resources, and the highest number of dependants."[60]

> "Merovingian politics undoubtedly contained a violent element, for the organization of political power depended largely on *rivalry between different factions* of nobles, each of which could wield military force. Competitive nobles were, however, generally keen to do the bidding of

57 Siegfried, T. *A beautiful Math: John Nash, Game Theory, and the modern quest for a code of Nature* (Washington 2006); Mansbridge, J. J. "The rise and fall of Self-Interest in the explanation of political life", in Mansbridge, J. J. (ed.) *Beyond Self-Interest* (Chicago 1990), p. 3-5

58 Bordieu, P. (trans. R. Nice) *The logic of practice*, (Stanford, 1990), p. 119-122

59 Halsall, G. "Violence and society: an introductory survey" in G. Halsall (ed.) *Violence and Society in the early medieval West* (Woodbridge 1998), pp. 1-45. (Emphasis added here and below). For a more recent restatement, Halsall, G. *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568*, (Cambridge 2007), p. 151

60 Garcia Moreno, L. A. "Legitimate and illegitimate violence in Visigothic law", in Halsall (ed.) (1998)

> the kings and 'mayors of the palace', so that rivalry mostly worked to keep the peace and to enhance rather than weaken the rulers' authority."[61]
>
> "…much of the violence in any period of history is of a sort *inherent to this imperfect world* in which we live …the sadly necessary violence that accompanies the task of survival."[62]
>
> "Killing is *always inevitable as an 'option of human agency,'* it becomes cruel reality by means of 'structural removals of the boundaries for possible action.'"[63]

These kinds of conclusion are characteristic of an academic atmosphere in which perceived differences in the prevalence of violence between the Roman and post-Roman period have diminished, and extend partly from a widespread reluctance to characterise any period or culture as 'particularly violent', thus 'othering' it. In the first of the quotes, and in many treatments of early medieval violence, the influence of Timothy Reuter's two articles on Carolingian warfare, or at least the popularity of their intuitively sensible position – that violence was done primarily on the basis of a culturally conditioned 'cost-benefit analysis' – is evident.[64] The idea of violence issuing from innate human cruelty has lost its

61 Fouracre, P. "Attitudes towards violence in seventh- and eighth-century Francia", in Halsall (ed.) (1998)

62 Drake, H. A. "Introduction: Gauging violence in Late Antiquity", in Drake, H. A. (ed.) *Violence in Late Antiquity: perceptions and practices*, (Hampshire 2006)

63 Zimmermann, M. "Violence in late antiquity reconsidered", in Drake (ed.) 2006, p. 356. For further examples, see for instance Van Dam, R. "Merovingian Gaul and the Frankish conquests", in Fouracre (ed.) *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge 1995), p.209-210; Mostert, M. "Introduction", in M. Mostert (ed.), *Medieval legal process: physical, spoken and written performances in the middle ages*, (Turnhout 2011), p. 1-2; Shaw, B. D. "War and Violence", in Bowersock, G. W., Brown, P. & Grabar, O. *Late Antiquity: A guide to the postclassical world* (1999), p. 159; Green, D. H. *Language and History in the Early Germanic World* (Cambridge 1998), p. 67-8; Collins, R. "The western kingdoms", in *The Cambridge Ancient History Volume 14: Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, AD 425–600* (Cambridge 2001), p. 131; Goffart, W. "Rome, Constantinople, and the Barbarians", in *AHR* (1981), p. 281; Bispham, E. "Warfare and the army" in Bispham, E. (ed.) *Roman Europe* (Oxford 2008), p. 157-8. White (2016), p. 229-232; Sarantis, A. "Waging war in Late Antiquity", in A. Serantis and N. Christie (eds.), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 2013), p. 22-3, 45-7

64 "Plunder and tribute in the Carolingian empire" (1985) and "The end of Carolingian military expansion" (1990), both reprinted in Rueter, T. (ed. J. L. Nelson) *Medieval polities and modern mentalities*, (Cambridge University, 2006).

cache, but been supplanted by something strikingly similar in effect: the idea of violence issuing from innate human self-interest and competitiveness. Violence as an epiphenomenon of human biology has been done away with, only to be replaced by violence as an epiphenomenon of socio-economic competition, and while the former of these positions tended artificially to exaggerate the characteristic violence of societies with relatively few social controls, the now popular latter position equally tends to artificially annihilate the differences between the configurations and levels of violence in different societies. Thus in recent times the famous conflict described by Gregory has been used to consider other aspects of the period, in particular the ideological intentions of the author, and, most frequently, the ways in which violence was limited through law and custom.[65] The underlying assumption, that the control rather than the generation of violence requires detailed investigation, or that violence is an ordinary feature of human conflict, requiring interpretation rather than explanation, persists.[66]

To those academic realms concerned with the manipulation of violence in the present day, however – for instance in military, criminal, and developmental psychology – the persistent appearance of unwanted and seemingly irrational violence (and non-violence) has remained the most pressing concern. As a result, questions about "the social uses of violence for building or limiting power"[67] have seemed less interesting, for much of the violence upon which modern psychological work focuses clearly lacks usefulness in those terms. In such disciplines, cultural differences in the valuation and meaning of violence are ancillary to the more important business of understanding and manipulating violence in practice, a goal which simply requires working and workable

65 Goffart (1988); Halsall (1998); Liebeschuetz (2007); Wood (2006); Janin, H. *Medieval Justice: Cases and laws in France, England and Germany, 500-1500*, (Jefferson, NC 2004), p. 22-3; Bossy, J. *Disputes and settlements: Law and human relations in the west* (Cambridge 1983), p. 25-8. We will return to both these questions – the intentions of Gregory as author, and the functioning of law and custom in relation to violence – in the next chapter.

66 For one recent exception, which argues that late medieval violence against peasants was formative of social *habitus* among the German nobility, see Gazi, A. "Pruning peasants: Private war and maintaining the lords' peace in late medieval Germany", in Cohen, E. & De Jong, M. B. *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power, and Gifts in Context* (Leiden 2001), p. 245-272

67 Pohl, W. "Perceptions of Barbarian Violence", in Drake, H. A. (ed.) *Violence in Late Antiquity: perceptions and practices* (Aldershot 2006), p. 25

concepts. This relative inattention to problems of cultural evaluation may be at least partially attributed to the fact that many researchers work on the clearest, most easily identified kinds of violence, such as shootings, gang fights, rape and child-beating. Their data and conclusions are, understandably, rarely free of something that looks like value-judgement,[68] and are occasionally unusable for the culturally-informed historian due to their conflation of violence with such obviously culturally constructed categories as 'anti-social behaviour' (roughly meaning anything that transgresses modern social norms, which violence clearly need not do).[69] But many modern approaches are now much more culturally reflexive, recognizing the potential social appropriateness even of illegal violence in a range of contexts.[70] Therefore they offer some possibilities for cross-cultural application.

The causes and implications of violence, so practically and un-agonistically defined, were subjected to some radical reassessment in the post-war period, with the observations of frontline troops' behaviour by S. L. A. Marshall being an early significant step toward a considerable problematisation of the comfortable certainties of generations of thinkers in the face of increasingly detailed and sophisticated observation of violent incidents and individuals.[71] The idea of men as ordinarily capable of violence was undermined by close observation of men in battle, which revealed a frequency and degree of reluctance to hurt and kill that belies assumptions of thinly veiled primordial destructiveness.[72] Even the promise of relative advantage, and the presence of

68 For instance, Shaver, P. R. & Mikulincer, M. "Introduction" in Shaver, P. R. & Mikulincer, M. (eds.) *Human aggression and violence: causes, manifestations, and consequences* (Washington 2011).

69 The work of criminologist Greg Barak, which in some ways is extraordinarily broad and penetrating, presents a particularly infuriating case from the historian's perspective. See for instance "A Critical Perspective on Violence" in DeKeseredy, W. S. & B. Perry (eds.), *Advancing Critical Criminology: Theory and Application* (Lexington 2006), pp. 133-154.

70 See, for instance, Connor, D. F. *Aggression and Antisocial behaviour in Children and Adolescents: Research and Treatment* (New York 2004), p. 7-14

71 Marshall, S. L. A. *Men against fire: the problem of battle command*, (New York 1947).

72 Although Marshall's conclusions were sketchy and overstated, his suggestions have been borne out by subsequent research – Chambers, J. W. "S. L. A. Marshall's *Men Against Fire*: New evidence regarding fire ratios", in *Perameters* 33 (Autumn 2003), 113-121; See Grossman, D. *On killing: The psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society* (Boston 1996); Collins, R. *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory* (Princeton 2009)

incentives and punishments, have been found to be far from reliable means either for eliciting or constraining violence.[73]

Thus, what Marshal's research was already emphasising two generations ago was the inadequacy of strategic explanations of violence under detailed scrutiny. Clearly *some* men could be induced to fight and kill with material and cultural incentives – money, medals, and so forth – but equally clearly, many others were not so easily persuaded. Since that time a growing body of detailed research has reconfirmed and extended this line of observation, and often points to a complex combination of psychological and other factors, in addition to perceived permissions and incentives, as contributing to combat motivation and breakdown.[74] In fields such as criminology, psychology and neuroscience, increasing emphasis has been placed on an image of violence as emerging from a multivariant basis that cannot be reduced to biological imperative, strategic expedient or cultural practice, necessitating approaches that simultaneously take in all these aspects and acknowledge their dialectical interrelationship.[75]

The long-term effects of previous experiences of violence have emerged as an important part of this more sophisticated image of the causation and consequences of violence.[76] Ferdinand Sutterluty, a researcher working with criminally violent youths in modern Germany, aptly sums up the position – "...when sociological research looks beyond the structural or cultural background factors that influence rates of youth violence and examines the violent acts themselves, it finds that many aspects cannot be grasped using models of rational

73 Marshall (1947); Grossman (1996); Newsome, B. "The myth of intrinsic combat motivation", *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 26: 24-46 (2003), p. 33; Bourke, J. *An intimate history of killing* (London 1999), p. 72-4; Collins (2008).

74 Grossman, D. *On killing: The psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society* (Boston 1996); Collins, R. *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory* (Princeton 2009); Jacoby, T. *Understanding conflict and violence: theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches* (New York 2008), provides a good survey of the inchoate literature on violence. See below.

75 Niehoff, D. *The biology of violence* (New York 1999); Athens, L. *Violent Criminal acts and actors revisited* (Urbana 1997), p. 13-23; Abbink, J. "Violence and culture: anthropological and evolutionary-psychological reflections on inter-group conflict in southern Ethiopia" in Schmitt, B. E. & Schroder, I. W. (eds.) 2001, p. 127.

76 Huessman, L. R., Dubow, E. F. & Boxer, P. "The transmission of aggressiveness across generations: Biological contextual, and social learning processes" in Shaver, P. R. & Mikulincer, M. (eds.) *Human aggression and violence: causes, manifestations, and consequences* (Washington 2011)

action."[77] In accounting for urban gang violence, Sutterluty has found prior experiences of violence, both as victim and perpetrator, to be more significant factors in determining future violent behaviour than calculations of material profit or social advantage. His research complements that of Marshal, since while the former was concerned with the failure of rewards and legitimation to incite violence, the latter is concerned with the failure of punishments and illegitimacy to prevent it. This multi-variant conception is now accepted by international institutions working to reduce violence globally.[78]

The relevance of these observation-based conclusions to personal attacks like that described in the opening passage of the chapter is clear. In attempting to explain that incident or its violent consequences purely in terms of competition and strategy, we risk imposing an artificially reductive logic upon the source material. Such logic not only lacks support in contemporary evidence, but also contradicts the findings of detailed observations of modern violence, which have emphasised the potentially irrational behavioural consequences of prior experience and other situational factors. The relevance of the point to warfare at the scale of regions and kingdoms may be less obvious, for while the motivation of the individual warrior may be impossible to deduce in strategic terms, the political decisions and conflicts which result in war are considerably less spontaneous and more strategic. Thus, warfare may fairly be seen as a much more technical affair than personal violence, which is therefore more susceptible to strategic analysis.

But the importance of objectively 'irrational' (i.e. non-strategic) factors, even to large-scale warfare, should not be ignored, for two reasons. The first and most self-evident relates to morale and willingness to participate in combat actively and enthusiastically, for attending the royal host and fighting effectively on its behalf are two very different things. A post-Roman army needed active fighters

77 Sutterluty, F. "Understanding Youth Violence: Rationality and its Limits", in *Illinois Child Welfare*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2009–2010), p. 47–64. It should be clarified that Sutterluty is not here referring to "rational choice theory" or any such narrow instrumental conception, but rather to the more general idea of violence as a means for the achievement of social advantage. See also, Horowitz, D. L. *The deadly ethnic riot* (Berkeley 2001), p. 553-560; Stewart, P. J. & Strathern, A. *Violence: Theory and ethnography* (London 2002), p. 7

78 Krug, E. G. et al, "World Report on Violence and Health", (Geneva, World Health Organization 2002), p. 12-15

to succeed, and a mass of half-hearted and flighty warriors was not a formula for military effectiveness. As John Keegan observed in an analysis of both ancient and modern accounts of battle, it is literary convention more than anything else which tends to minimize and annihilate the thoughts and feelings of individuals on the battlefield, and their importance to the overall outcome.[79] Therefore the question of motivation at an individual level remains crucial to military success, possibly all the more so at a time of irregular military discipline and organization, such as the one under investigation.

The second reason relates to the first, and concerns the question of agency in the post-Roman hosts - in other words, the question of who really made the late-Roman wars and battles happen in the first place. There is a virtually unavoidable tendency in political history to follow the conventions of Gregory of Tours et al in offering a vision of military decision-making as the personal and nearly exclusive domain of kings and other commanders.[80] In the midst of such smooth 'great man' narratives, the thoughts and feelings of individuals and small groups of warriors fade into obscurity and apparent insignificance. But as the opening of the Sichar affair illustrates, nameless men, as well as great leaders, can be instrumental in determining not just the outcome of a fight, but whether it happens in the first place. Several pieces of circumstantial evidence from the late- and post-Roman narratives of wars would seem to confirm the validity of this observation even at the level of what we might call high politics.[81] The military tales of Gregory of Tours are replete with instances of kings struggling to control their armies, in some cases because the warriors insist upon battle, in others where they refuse it, and most often in struggling to prevent looting of friendly territory.[82] We should not contrast this state of affairs too starkly with Rome's armies – Ammianus gives many indications that the army frequently forced decisions upon their commanders, and Tacitus describes a serious mutiny against the easy-going Trebellius as stemming from the fact that "...the troops,

79 Keegan, *The face of battle* (1978), p. 12-30. The importance of this perspective to the study of warfare in late Antiquity is beginning to be acknowledged – see Sarantis (2013), p. 45-58, 74-80.

80 For instance, in Wood, I. *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (New York 1994), p. 38-50

81 Whitby, "Armies and Society" (2001), p. 480. See Chapter 2.

82 *Histories* IV.14, IV.49, IV.50, VI.12, VI.31, VII.24, VIII.30, X.3, X.9.

accustomed to campaigns, got out of hand when they had nothing to do."[83] This, despite the fact that the Roman armies were subject to a more sophisticated regime of central control than those of the post-Roman kingdoms.[84] Thus we should imagine that the proportion of dissatisfied and unwilling warriors required to paralyse the post-Roman armies and make them ineffective would have been considerably lower than their earlier counterparts. If the majority of Franks had been happy with their lot and reluctant to fight, the remaining minority would have had great trouble rounding them up, since they were essentially self-sufficient and thus materially independent. Michael Whitby's comparison of the post-Roman armies of the west and their counterparts in the eastern empire concluded that western armies were, in relative terms, "...an independent force capable of dictating to its nominal masters."[85] For wars to happen, a considerable critical mass of active consent to participation in combat and other violence was necessary, and modern research militates against the assumption that such a critical mass would have been composed purely on the basis of a community of interests.

1.2 – Physiological and Psychological aspects of violent behaviour and combat motivation

All we have demonstrated so far is that the desire to fight, and the reluctance to fight, may have less to do with strategic thinking – even by a culturally informed metric – than historians have been conventionally disposed to assume. The task of comprehending the missing pieces of this motivational puzzle remains. Of course, to synthesise the vast and inchoate data gathered on violence from the many academic fields in which it is studied would require a substantial book in itself, and the intention here is merely to highlight some aspects of the generation of violence which have been under-appreciated to date, but which are particularly germane to the study of the post-Roman warrior societies. In this

83 Tacitus, *Agricola*, p. 67. For the third century, see for instance, Herodian, 6.8. For Ammianus, see Chapter 2

84 Whitby, "The Army, c. 420-602" (2001), p. 297; Pohl, W. "Introduction: strategies of distinction", in Pohl (ed.) *Strategies of Distinction*, (2002), p. 4. There is considerable disagreement on how different the late- and post-Roman armies of the West were in terms of organization. See Chapter 2.

85 Whitby (2001), p. 308. This point will be taken up at length in the next chapter.

section, the extent to which of violent behaviour is a product of physiological responses and developmental processes will be brought into relief. It is important to be clear from the outset that this re-introduction of automaticity and biology into the canon of explanatory factors for violence in no way represents an attempt to supplant existing conceptions of violence as a strategic and cultural phenomenon.[86] We are not here 'pulling back the curtain' of rational culturally-informed analysis to reveal the 'true' biological causes of violence; the focus is upon behavioural development in relation to *experience*, which is of course culturally evaluated and constructed, if not entirely determined. The purpose is to set out the case for the cross-cultural relevance of non-rational physiological factors in the generation of violence – in particular those by which it is more or less automatically reproduced and transmitted between individuals – and to explain their operation.

The adaptation of human psychology and behaviour towards increased resistance to violent experience and increased aggression can be quite clearly observed in a range of pre-industrial 'warrior' cultures, modern military establishments, and criminal violent subcultures, in the present day. In all these settings, persistent inclinations toward violence can be seen to develop through experience, which are then expressed in other contexts. Anthropological work has shown how pre-industrial cultures prepare themselves for war with violent ritual practices: the Yukpa of Venezuela prepare for raids by firing arrows at each-other, and hit each-other over the heads with bows as a test of manhood.[87] The Suri of Ethiopia engage in ritualized duelling between periods of inconclusive warfare against neighbouring groups.[88] The Nuer groups of Sudan shifted between phases of external warfare and local 'feud', the latter being more typically conducted with less lethal weaponry.[89] A regression analysis of data

86 For a lucid general discussion of the automatic aspects of human decision-making, and their dynamic relationship with more deliberate, cognitive processes, see Kahneman, D. *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York, 2011)

87 Halbamayer, E. "Socio-cosmological contexts and forms of violence: War, vendetta, duels and suicide among the Yukpa of north-western Venezuela", in Schmidt, B. E. & Schroder, I. W. *Anthropology of violence and conflict* (London 2001)

88 Abbink (2001), p. 130

89 Gluckman (1955), p. 4-5

from ninety pre-industrial societies found that "harsh socialization practices", including (but not limited to) pain infliction and violent punishments, correlated strongly with broader social propensities to both internal and external warfare.[90] It is important to emphasise that many of these social practices are not entirely ritualized or even necessarily sanctioned by the community.[91] In all these studies we can see warriors – in the sense of men psychologically willing and able to fight – being made through a process of repeated and systematic, although often incidental, exposure to (usually non-lethal) violence. Or, to take the opposite perspective, we may see a social environment characterized by violent practices being perpetuated and reproduced by the warrior groups.

Statistical work on modern armies has highlighted analogous trends, despite the efforts of western societies to establish strict conceptual and legal boundaries between mundane personal violence and official collective violence. A study on childhood trauma among the US military found that volunteers were much more likely to have suffered physical abuse in early life than the general population,[92] while statistical research on the British and Israeli armed forces has found a strong relationship between military experience and violent crime. A Lancet study found that while British army enrolment in itself did not have a statistical impact on later violence, combat roles and exposure to 'traumatic events' carried with them a substantially increased risk of future violent crime.[93] And an analysis of Israeli homicide and robbery statistics showed a solid correlation between periods of high military activity and spikes in the murder rate, concluding that "...in the long run, violence resulting from conflicts with outgroups ('enemies') is generalized also toward in-group members of society. In other words, there is a gradual...process of erosion of basic social norms regarding violence within society." The fact that these trends are in evidence where they are so clearly socially unwanted, in societies which do everything within their (very

90 Ross, M. H. "A Cross-Cultural Theory of Political Conflict and Violence", in *Political Psychology*, vol. 7 no. 6 (1986), p. 447-453

91 See for instance Abbink (2001), p. 133-5

92 Rosen, L. N., Martin, L. "The measurement of childhood trauma among male and female soldiers in the U.S. Army", Military Medicine, 161:6 (1996), p. 342-345; Khawand, C. "The Cycle of (Legal) Violence? Child Abuse and Military Aspirations" (2009) [unpublished, Florida International University], citing the 1957 Wisconsin Longitudinal Study.

93 Macmanus, D. "Violent offending by UK military personnel deployed to Iraq and Afganistan: a data linkage cohort study", in *The Lancet* vol.381, iss.9870 (16 March 2013)

considerable) powers to prevent elision of conduct between the battlefield and social life, makes these observations all the more striking.[94]

All this suggests that the experience of violence, under certain conditions, somehow stays with many individuals, potentially to re-emerge in the form of violent behaviour at a later date. The consistent refrain of studies of criminal violence in particular, which evidently also applies to military contexts, is that not only tolerance of violent experience, but enhanced inclination to violent behaviour, can be picked up and passed between people like a virus[95] constituting a 'cycle of violence'.[96] It also tends to confirm the impression that the resulting manifestations of violence are not necessarily socially conventional, entirely voluntary, or rationally beneficial to their perpetrators. Individuals who have been violently socialized through experience may join the ranks of those involved in legitimate and profitable violence, or express their inclinations in the form of illegitimate and irrational outbursts, or do both.

How exactly these processes work is suggested by more detailed research on human psychology and physiology, in terms of behavioural conditioning,

94 Landau, S. F. & Pfeffermann, D. "A time series analysis of violent crime and its relation to prolonged states of warfare: the Israeli case", in *Criminology* 26:3 (1988); see, also Mullins, C. W. & Young, J. K. "Cultures of violence and acts of terror: applying a legitimation-habituation model to terrorism", in *Crime and Delinquency* 58 (2010). Cf. Macek, I. "Predicament of war: Sarajevo experiences and the ethics of war" in Schmidt, B. E. & Schroder, I. W. *Anthropology of violence and conflict* (London 2001), p. 208-9. Apocryphal evidence from the SS Einsatzgruppen charged with carrying out massacres in the Second World War presents a more extreme version of the same process, as (for instance) estimated by one commander in 1939 - "...The worst damage affecting Germans which has developed as a result of the present conditions, however, is the tremendous brutalization and moral depravity which is spreading rapidly among precious German manpower like an epidemic...It is surprising how quickly such people join forces with those of weak character in order, as is currently happening in Poland, to give rein to their bestial and pathological instincts." - Rhodes, R. "Violent socialization and the SS-Einsatzgruppen", in Athens, L. & Ullmer, J. T. (eds.) *Violent acts and violentization: assessing, applying, and developing Lonnie Athens' theories*, Oxford 2003, p. 93-106

95 A comparison influentially made by Dr James Gilligan on the basis of his work with incarcerated violent criminals in the US: Gilligan, J. *Violence: reflections on our deadliest epidemic* (Philadelphia 1999). These ideas have recently become influential in the UK debate on violence reduction, following highly successful interventions in Glasgow based on the conception of violence as a "public health problem". See, for instance, Skae, T. "The violence virus: A community response to reducing youth violence in London", report for The London Community Foundation (2017)

96 Widom, C.S. "The cycle of violence", in *Science* 244:4901, (1989) p. 160-166; Khawand 2009; cf. Athens & Ullmer (ed.) 2003. Not to be confused with the occasional use of the term by historians to describe feuds between individual families, for instance in Austin, G. "Vengeance and law in eleventh-century Worms: Burchard and the canon law of feuds", in Pennington, K. et al *Medieval church law and the origins of western legal tradition* (Washington 2006)

desensitization, trauma, and 'learned' intrinsic motivation. These conceptual categories are to a certain extent superimposed upon the variegated studies employed below for the sake of clarity, since many of those studies employ different semantic and conceptual frameworks in assessing their subject matter. Some, for instance, speak in terms of 'post-traumatic stress disorder' (or PTSD), which may rightly be viewed as a culturally defined category embracing a wide range of symptoms,[97] or refer to the development of violent behaviour in value-laden terms which are inappropriate to an early medieval context.[98] Detailed analysis of the activity and development of specific brain regions, such as the hippocampus and amygdala, has also been simplified and rendered in more general terms.

The most central themes in understanding both the intrinsic difficulty of violence, which makes behavioural conditioning necessary, and the processes by which conditioning operates, are the concepts of *arousal* and *imitation*. These concepts appear prominently in one form or other in all the studies referred to here. Extreme physiological arousal, which is a characteristic response to experiencing physical violence whether as participant or witness, among both humans and other mammals,[99] is associated with the release of a potent cocktail of chemicals in the brain, among which adrenaline is the best known if not necessarily the most important.[100] Most people in the present day might describe the feeling of these processes as discomfort, panic, fear, or possibly (depending on person and specific scenario) excitement. As we shall see, others, much less common in ordinary society, might even describe the feeling as one of enjoyment. All these terms, as Dave Grossman aptly puts it, are cultural labels for what is, on a biological level, a nonspecific threat response. But whatever

97 Awareness has grown that PTSD is a term that conflates a range of symptoms which are not necessarily comorbid. See Taft, C. T. & Kaloupek, G. et al, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder symptoms, psychological reactivity, alcohol problems, and aggression among military veterans", in *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 116:3 (2007), p. 498-9; Garfinkel, S. & Liberzon, I. "Neurobiology of PTSD: A review of neuroimaging findings", in *Psychiatric Annals* 39:6 (June 2009); Macmanus (2013); Jones, "Historical approaches to post-combat disorders", (2006)

98 E.g. Huessman et al (2011)

99 Jansen, A., Nguyen, X., Karpitski, V. & Mettenleiter, M. "Central command neurons of the sympathetic nervous system: Basis of the fight-or-flight response", in *Science Magazine* 5236:270 (27 October 1995)

100 Niehoff (1999), p. 121-126

cultural labels are attached to these feelings, they are unusual and powerful, making violence a uniquely challenging experience psychologically.[101] The exceptional human capacity for imitation may also act as a brake on the enactment of violence, since it has been shown to extend to the capacity and indeed the innate inclination to internalize the feelings of others, including their pain and suffering.[102] Thus both intense and overwhelming arousal, and appreciation of the pain of others, frequently make humans highly unreliable fighters and killers.[103] To this extent we may view the different cultural constructions of intense physiological arousal under conditions of violence or threat, as well as cultural diminishment of the suffering of others, as social attempts to cope with the extreme and unfamiliar physiological states entailed in violence.

Severe or frequent exposure to violence and threat, and the accompanying states of arousal, result in a broad range of long-term changes in the brains and bodies of humans and other mammals, producing highly diverse behavioural outcomes. These range from increased fearfulness, in the sense of inclination and tendency to flee, to heightened aggression, in the sense of inclination to attack and fight, as well as to a range of other symptoms associated with mental 'trauma' in the scientific literature.[104] Historical and sociological work provides

101 Grossman, D. "Psychological effects of combat", in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict* (2000)

102 Iacoboni, M. "Imitation, empathy, and mirror neurons", in *Annual Review of Psychology* 60 (2009), p. 653-670

103 Some examples are collected in Collins (2009), p. 18-20

104 In fact trauma can result in both increased *and* reduced fearfulness in the same individual, by producing a generalized disregulation of fear responses that results in exaggerated threat perception in non-threatening scenarios, and suppressed threat perception in threatening scenarios – see Garfinkel, S. & Abelson, J. L. et al, "Impaired Contextual Modulation of Memories in PTSD: An fMRI and Psychophysiological Study of Extinction Retention and Fear Renewal", in *Journal of Neuroscience* 34:40 (2014). Typical symptoms in modern warfare are categorized by recent research as "re-experiencing, avoidance, numbing, dysphoric-arousal and anxious-arousal" – Osario, C., Jones, N. et al, "Combat Experiences and their Relationship to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Clusters in UK Military Personnel Deployed to Afghanistan", in *Behavioural Medicine* 44:2 (2017), p. 131-140; Garfinkel et al, (2009); Niehoff (1999), p. 48-9. For a critical view of the PTSD concept, and qualified acceptance of the general concept of trauma, see Argenti, M. & Schramm, K. "Introduction", in M. Argenti & K. Schramm (eds.), *Remembering Violence: Anthropological Perspectives on intergenerational transmission* (New York, 2010), p. 1-22. The question of whether and to what extent we can think of individuals in late antiquity as "traumatized", particularly in the sense of subjective emotional distress, is a difficult one, and for the purposes of this thesis the concept of adaptation and maladaptation will generally be preferred.

evidence for the central role of culture in determining which kinds of behavioural development become dominant. In different cultural and subcultural contexts, either 'flight' or 'fight' can become more or less conventional forms of behaviour in scenarios of threat and potential conflict.[105] There is always a spectrum of reactions to experiencing serious violence, but in contexts where exposure to (and demands for) violence are persistent and relatively normal, the symptoms associated with psychological trauma shift in emphasis from anxiety to aggression and loss of empathy.[106] Inevitably, the complexities of social life make more variegated demands, making fear and revulsion appropriate responses to some violent contexts, and aggression and enthusiasm appropriate to others, but what the research into violence cited above illustrates is the difficulty of maintaining such cultural boundaries.[107] This is because the adaptation of behaviour and feelings is only partly the work of culture, and remains partly an outcome of non-cognitive, unconscious and automatic biological processes, which are imperfectly adapted to the sophisticated demands of complex societies.[108]

The mechanisms by which adaptations responding to experiences of violence produce future violent behaviour are in some ways intuitively comprehensible. Human capacities for imitation and internalization of the feelings and actions of others, which (as we have seen) can act as a restraining force on violence, can also help to generate it. Albert Bandura's famous bobo doll experiments were the

105 Lutz, C. *Unnatural emotions: everyday sentiments on a Micronesian atoll and their challenge to Western theory*, (Chicago 1988), p. 185; Papachristos, A. V. "Murder by social structure: Dominance relations and the social structure of gang homicide", in *American Journal of Sociology* 115:1 (2009), p. 74-128

106 Roach, C. B. "Shallow Affect, No Remorse: the shadow of trauma in the inner city", in *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 19:2 (2013), 150-163. Combat trauma associated with modern warfare would also, for instance, presumably be more associated with anxiety than its more primitive counterparts, since such symptoms are particularly associated with encountering explosive devices – Osario et al (2017), p. 6

107 For an opposing view, see Knauft, B. M. "Reconsidering violence in simple human societies", in *Current Anthropology* 28:4 (Aug-Oct 1987), p. 473. His argument against "strict ecological determinism" and explanations that rely on evolutionary psychology is compelling, and he establishes that not all serious social violence is the result of harsh socialization in early life. But his argument for the "psychological compartmentalization" of violence which can isolate ritual practice from more ordinary life is not fully sustained by the data he provides, which shows non-ritual murder to also be unusually high among the Gebusi.

108 Richardson, P. J. & Boyd, R. *Not by genes alone: How culture transformed human evolution*, (Chicago 2005), p. 151-162, provides an illuminating discussion on this topic.

first to illustrate clearly how human proclivities to imitation make repeated exposure to violence a potential cause of future violence, as behaviours witnessed are deeply encoded in young brains in particular, and may be quasi-automatically expressed at a later time.[109] 'Mirror neurons' observed in primate brains, and thought to exist in humans, make witnessing actions almost like a form of practice: some of the same regions of the brain activate for observation as for performance of the action itself.[110] This effect is especially evident where the violent role-model is a senior or respected figure.[111] Desensitization and loss of empathy for the fear and pain of victims can also result from frequent exposure to violence and other cruelty. And, of course, violence becomes increasingly habituated through practice, as neural pathways involved in violent behaviour are strengthened at the expense of other regions: aggressive responses can be 'hardwired' through repetition.[112] None of these effects are, however, free from cultural influence: negative assessments of violence drastically reduce the effect sizes of automatic learning and desensitization, and a culturally conducive environment is required to transform aggression and violence into relatively ordinary outcomes.[113] Thus the results of the natural human propensity to imitate are shaped by their subject-matter; in the absence of violent role models, violent outcomes become overwhelmingly unlikely.

But passive learning and desensitization are not the only mechanisms by which violence is 'transmitted' between individuals, nor would they alone serve to explain the kind of sudden outbursts which characterise so much modern violent crime, and which would seem to characterize the Sichar affair. The extreme arousal associated with the experience of violence also potentially

109 Bandura, A., Ross, D. & Ross, S. A., "Transmission of aggression through the imitation of aggressive models", in *Journal of Abnormal & Social Psychology* 63: 3, p. 575-82

110 Iacoboni 2009, p. 653-7. The difficulty of establishing the existence of mirror neurons in the human brain with absolute certainty extends from the illegality of invasive experimentation on live human subjects.

111 Bandura (1961), p. 579; for military contexts, Kellet, A. *Combat motivation: the behaviour of soldiers in battle* (Boston 1982), p. 307-8

112 Sterling Jr, J. & Amaya-Jackson, L. [American Academy of Pediatrics], "Understanding the behavioural and emotional consequences of child abuse", in *Pediatrics* 122:3 (Sep 2008), p. 668-9

113 Dodge, K. A. "Social information processing patterns as mediators of the interactions between genetic factors and life experiences in the development of aggressive behaviour" in Shaver, P. R. & Mikulincer, M. (eds.) *Human aggression and violence: causes, manifestations, and consequences* (Washington 2011), p. 168-176

provokes other physiological and psychological changes which go beyond mere 'hardening' and actually make individuals a danger to those around them. A principle factor by which such behavioural transformations can occur is threat sensitivity, which can become over-developed under conditions of persistent threat and violence, leading to increased vigilance or 'hyper-vigilance'.[114] This can manifest itself as a tendency to see threats and challenges everywhere, and such 'hostile attribution biases', as psychologists have labelled them, can result in what, to the victims, often seem like unprovoked attacks. A perfectly innocent and incidental meeting of eyes may be interpreted as an aggressive challenge. This kind of heightened threat-sensitivity and hyper-vigilance is a common effect of exposure to military violence, childhood abuse, and a range of experiences of violence in other settings.[115]

Another salient factor in the quasi-automatic social reproduction and transmission of violent behaviour, alluded to earlier, is the important issue of subjective interpretations of the arousal associated with experiences of violence. As mentioned, many in the West would probably describe the physiological arousal associated with participation in real and immediate violence as fear, but it need not be described in this way. The testimonies of people who have participated in frequent and/or extreme violence often reveal their subjective perception of the experience as thrilling and even intensely pleasurable.[116] Participants from military and criminal settings have described these feelings as a kind of 'high' akin to a powerful drug, which, given the potent cocktail of chemicals involved, is not an entirely inaccurate description.[117] Participants in violence can also become psychologically addicted to the social power and

114 Niehoff (1999), p. 121-6. See above, note 104.

115 Kimble, M., Fleming, K. & Bennion, K. A. "Contributors to hypervigilance in a military and civilian sample" in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 28:8 (2013); Sterling Jr, J. & Amaya-Jackson, L. (2008); Mat Saat, M. B. & Geshina, A. M. S. "The risk of hypervigilance among police personnel", in *Beyond* (PDRM Selangor Bulletin) 4 (2013), p. 22-4; Maruna, S. & Butler, M. "Violent self-narratives and hostile attribution biases", in D. Youngs (ed.), *Behavioural Analysis of Crime: Studies in David Cantor's Investigative Psychology* (Aldershot 2017), p. 27-48; Dodge, K. A. & Malone, P. S. et al, "Hostile Attribution Bias and aggressive behaviour in global context", in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 112:30 (2015); Orobio de Castro, B. & Veerman, J. W. et al, "Hostile attribution intent and aggressive behaviour: a meta-analysis", in *Child Development* 73:3 (2002), 916-934; Huessman et al, (2011)

116 Athens (1998); Bourke (1999), p. 18-20; Nadelson, T. *Trained to kill: soldiers at war* (Baltimore 2005), p. 23-5, also citing Bufford, B. *Among the thugs: the experience, and the seduction, of crowd violence* (1992); Sutterluty (2009)

respect that accompanies a fearful reputation, internalizing their 'violent notoriety' in the construction of identity.[118] We may view these traits, once again, partly as an act of sub-cultural construction, and partly as a process of physiological adaptation, which allows individuals to cope more effectively with repeated exposure to intense and visceral experiences, but at the cost of also making them more prone to desire and actively seek to provoke such experiences.

It is important to stress the variability of these processes not only between subcultures, but also between individuals. Under the same conditions, some individuals are more biologically disposed to developing violent behavioural profiles than others in any given context. In the modern West the most important biological factor identified in these differences is what is known as 'affect', meaning the degree of physiological intensity with which emotions are experienced in violent or other intense situations.[119] Less sensitive 'low-affect' individuals are less likely to find experiences of violence overwhelming, and are therefore more capable of enjoying them, than others, and such physiological profiles are inordinately represented among modern violent criminals.[120] The most extreme end of 'low-affect' is one of the defining physiological markers by which violent psychopaths are identified.[121] But evidence from the US prison system and elsewhere implies that 'low-affect' and psychopathy is not only made genetically, but also can come about through social processes.[122] In short, people can learn not only to tolerate violent experience but to love it, and once the

117 Nadelson (2005); Sutterluty (2009). Foucault's concept of 'limit-experience' is relevant here in that the powerful feelings involved in participation in serious violence shows a capacity for breaking through ordinary thresholds of morality - "Interview with Michel Foucault", in *Michel Foucault: Essential Works, Volume 3; Power* (London 2000)

118 Athens, L. & Ullmer (2003), p. 17-18

119 Roach (2013); Niehoff (1999), p. 129-130.

120 Ibid.

121 Herve, H. "Psychopathy across the ages: A history of the Hare Psychopath", in H. Herve and J. C. Yuille (eds.) *The Psychopath* (New York 2007), p. 31-56; Hakkanen-Nyholm, H. & Nyholm, J.-O. *Psychopathy and Law: A Practitioner's Guide* (New York 2012), p. 146

122 Huesmann, L. R. & Kirwil, L. "Why observing violence increases the risk of violent behaviour by the observer", in D. J. Flannery, A. T. Vazsonyi, & I. D. Waldman (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of violent behaviour and aggression* (Cambridge 2007), p. 545-570; Raine, A. "Autonomic nervous system factors underlying disinhibited, antisocial, and violent behaviour: biological perspectives and treatment implications", in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 794:1 (September 1996), p. 46-59; cf. Palmeri Sams, D. & Truscott, S. D. "Empathy, exposure to community violence, and use of violence among urban, at-risk adolescents", in *Child and youth care forum* vol.33 iss.1 (Feb 2004), p. 33-50

experience of violence has been subjectively constructed so as to be associated with such psychologically and physiologically intrinsic rewards, no material or cultural motivations may be necessary to provoke it.[123]

A considerable quantity of research also points to the powerful role of the immediate social group in generating violence. Ever since observations of battlefield behaviour in detail undermined military confidence in the capacity of soldiers to perform their combat duties reliably, the instrumentality of the immediate social group or 'primary group' has been a principle and highly effective means by which such reluctance has been overcome in practice.[124] Albert J. Glass commented that "even the poorly motivated soldier is literally forced to adopt the prevailing group attitude because the battle situation is hardly the place to be left alone."[125] Such reasoning certainly would apply to the pre-industrial battlefield every bit as much, and would not have been unfamiliar to Vegetius, who suggested that inexperienced warriors must be prepared for battle by participation in minor skirmishes in the company of veterans.[126] Through such group dynamics, the principles of arousal and imitation can be harnessed to bring the group into step with its most active members, as those who feel the least discomfort and the most enthusiasm set examples which drag the remaining members in their wake, so to speak. Similar conclusions have been reached in studies of criminal violence, with association with violent peers being identified as an important 'risk factor'.[127] The results of this kind of kind of 'entrainment' within groups can potentially go far beyond ordinary or ordinate violence and verge into what in modern terms would be described as atrocity.[128]

123 Roach (2013), p. 6; Sutterluty (2009), p. 49-50

124 Bourke 1999, p. 87, citing Kellet, A. "Combat motivation", in Belenky, G. *Contemporary studies in combat psychiatry* (New York 1987)

125 "Preventive psychiatry in the combat zone", in *US Armed Forces Medical Journal* vi.683 (1953), p. 689

126 See Introduction, note 1.

127 Hemphill, S. A. & Smith, R. et al, "Modifiable determinants of youth violence in Australia and the United States: A longitudinal study", in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 42:3 (2009), p. 289-309

128 Bourke (1999), p. 179; Horowitz (2001); Collins (2008). The latter describes such scenarios persuasively in terms of 'forward panic', that is, a kind of violent emotional entrainment in which participants' psychologies are subsumed into the group under the influence of the chemicals produced by the brain in such 'fight-or-flight' conditions.

In all these ways, violent behaviour is passed between individuals as a social product in human cultures and sub-cultures, and transformed from an exceptional and shocking experience into a relatively normal one. Clearly there are important elements of culturally conditioned strategy here. But the process is neither straightforward nor under the full conscious control of participants, and its outcomes include not just enhanced capacities to enact violence where it is deemed culturally appropriate, but also increased tendencies to enact violence where it is not. This returns us to Marc Bloch's seldom-quoted maxim, that "the irrational is an important element in *all* history", to which we should add, "especially where violence is involved", since the physiological effects of experiencing violence can include the loss of capacities for what would commonly be called rational decision-making among its participants, as their subjective perceptions of threat and challenge fall out of step with their contemporaries, and the development of intrinsic motivations for violence goes far beyond what is commonly deemed to be socially appropriate. The same processes that produce 'hard men' capable of enacting necessary violence without hesitation also produce a dangerous effluent of indifference to suffering, aggressiveness, high reactivity and enjoyment of violence.

Violence, then, is a product not just of socio-economic competition, or even of cultural *habitus*, but also of adaptation to experience. The processes by which it is socially reproduced have much to do with automatic physiological mechanisms of response and development, which interact dynamically with the cognitive processes taken for granted in human motivation. In the simplest terms, people do not only fight for discrete goals, or because society tells them to fight, as very reasonable and often repeated *a priori* understanding of human motivation might deduce. They also fight because they have been primed – both at a psychological and a physiological level – to react violently, to interpret situations in terms of violence, and even to positively enjoy and look for opportunities for violence, by their prior experiences. The hitherto underappreciated physiological parts of this process are all related to the similarly underappreciated, though not unappreciated, powerful states of physiological arousal associated with violent experiences, and the ways in which

the human body and brain adapts in response to them. These include exaggerated perception and response to threat, diminished empathy and fear, increased aggression, and positive interpretations of the experience of violence itself, as well as the psychological dynamics of the violent group. In all these ways, the violence of warfare may insinuate itself into ordinary social life, and the violence of social life may contribute to enthusiasm and competence in war.

Returning to the specific discussion of how post-Roman armies were prepared for battle, what the sociological and psychological work suggests is that there may be a much greater quantity of evidence for the causes of military participation in the late- and post-Roman Frankish kingdoms than a conventional understanding of the phenomenon of violence would imply. Since preparation for war can be deeply embedded and integrated into social (including political) life, sources relating to the violence of social life may in fact be precious evidence for a unique social system by which competences and inclinations to violence were reproduced and propagated in the absence of constant centralized organization and more conventionally professional military training. And since experiences of military violence can profoundly influence the behavioural and psychological development of individuals, sources relating to warfare may have more to tell us about the social development of the affected communities than has been appreciated hitherto.

In the following chapters we will look again at the warrior elites of late- and post-Roman Gaul and Germany through this lens, connecting their social and cultural evolution with the exceptional exposure of the regions in question to warfare. And we will reconsider their laws and social conventions, to explore whether and in what ways they can help us to understand the process by which violence and aggressive personality types were continually reproduced, and psychological readiness for war was maintained. We will use this evidence to think about the specific social configuration of violence by which social life prepared post-Roman warriors for war, and vice-versa.

Chapter 2: Franks and Roman armed forces around the Western Frontiers to c. 395

> "It is their sport to send axes hurtling through the vast void and know beforehand where the blow will fall, to whirl their shields, to outstrip with leaps and bounds the spears they have hurled and reach the enemy first. Even in boyhood's years the love of fighting is full-grown. Should they chance to be sore pressed by numbers or by the luck of the ground, death may overwhelm them, but not fear; unconquerable they stand their ground, and their courage well-nigh outlives their lives."[129]
>
> - Sidonius Apollinaris, *Panegyric for the Emperor Majorian*

This passage, from Sidonius Apollinaris's panegyric to Majorian, illustrates both the interest of the Franks, for the purposes of this thesis, and the difficulty of studying them prior to the sixth century. Although written in the context of two centuries of continuous and intimate contact between the Franks and the Romans, Sidonius' description remains an infuriatingly ossified stereotype, which obscures as much as it illuminates. And this is true for all of our sources prior to *Lex Salica*, which universally come from within an empire for which barbarians served not just practical but also ideological purposes. So in a sense, while we can address the realities of the late empire, we cannot but view the Franks through the distorting lens of imperial perception. Nonetheless, even a jaundiced view can be of use in understanding the relationship between the empire and the Franks. And one stereotype that the Franks were deemed to epitomize – the suitability and enthusiasm for war – was provably related to reality, for it shaped Roman military policy profoundly in the fourth century. It formed a vital plank of the relationship of the Franks to the empire, and influenced the development of military subcultures close to the frontiers, who were sometimes characterized in similar terms. It is with this stereotype, its basis in reality, and its effects, that this chapter is principally concerned.

129 Sidonius Apollinaris' Panegyric for Majorian, in W. B. Anderson (trans.) *Poems & Letters*, (1936) p. 82-3

This chapter traces, as far as is possible in light of the one-sided evidence, the development of the Franks to the end of the fourth century. It also traces the much better attested, but no less contested, development of various armed groups which comprised the armies of northern Gaul, who fought alongside and against Franks throughout the period, and who would ultimately make important contributions to the character of the Frankish kingdoms. In the process the discussion engages with the debates surrounding the extent and nature of the violence affecting the north-western empire, and the identity of the Franks and other groups whom the Roman armies sought to recruit. It will be argued that the regions close to the Rhine frontier were marked out by an apparent proliferation of violent subcultures, which produced a large quantity of fighters who were a source both of strength and of trouble to the empire. And it will be argued that the identities of these subcultures, while not inimical to Roman military effectiveness, were somewhat estranged from Roman-ness – particularly in their reputation for unrestrained violence – in a way that laid the ground for the takeover of warrior elites who claimed self-consciously non-Roman identities.

2.1 – The Franks, Gaul, and the Gallic Armies to the Mid-Fourth Century

The Franks were a relatively late development on the Rhine frontier, only emerging after centuries of contact between the Empire and various Germanic groups. An apparent supra-tribal group that included a number of local and 'ethnic' identities, they were seemingly more or less synonymous with a number of tribes who had existed on the fringes of the empire since its first occupation of northern Gaul, including Chamavi, Chatti, Amsivarii, Bructeri, Sicumbri and Batavi.[130] The process by which these groups were brought together is obscure, but the manner of the Franks' arrival in the empire suggests it was not entirely peaceful.[131] It would seem that the Franks were to some extent the institutional product of the longstanding relationship between the Germanic peoples and their

130 Halsall, G. *Barbarian migrations and the Roman West*, 376-568, (Cambridge 2007), p. 118-119. The panegyricist Nazarius adds the Cherusci and "Lancionae" to this list, but the former is thought to have ceased to exist sometime earlier, and his inclusion of the Alamanni in the supposed coalition weakens his already questionable evidence – *Pan.Lat.* VI.18

131 See below, p. 51-2

more sophisticated southern neighbours.[132] Large agglomerations of tribes had coalesced several times north of the Rhine over the centuries, but the Franks were symptomatic of a more general trend by which larger political bodies emerged who could more effectively deal with – and take on – the empire and its armies.[133]

The evolution of larger and more militarily threatening groups beyond the Rhine was associated with social and economic developments which were influenced by contact with the empire. Archaeological evidence illustrates the growing populations, as well as the increasing quantity and quality of manufactured wares north of the Rhine.[134] This demographic and economic growth was a contributory factor to the growth of Germanic military retinues, which were able to take the lion's share of the opportunities for enrichment through trade, subsidies, and violent raiding, provided by the empire.[135] What was more, the empire systematically intensified the social and economic incentives for violence for barbarians on both sides of the frontier.[136] Enhanced opportunities for slave-trading made predatory raiding more economically attractive, while contact with the empire stimulated the opening of mines which (if anything like their Roman counterparts) must have entailed considerable brutality. A massive votive weapon burial from early-third century Jutland is illustrative of the increasing size and sophistication of barbarian armed forces.[137] It also serves as a reminder that throughout the imperial period, wars of considerable scale and potential historical significance were taking place beyond the Rhine that went unnoticed by the literary sources.

---

132 Todd, M. "The Germanic peoples and Germanic society", in *CAH* 12 (Cambridge 2005), p. 441-2; Pohl, W. "Frontiers and ethnic identities: some final considerations", in Curta, F. (ed.), *Borders, Barriers and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout 2005), p. 263

133 Heather, P. "The Late Roman art of client management: Imperial defence in the fourth century West, in W. Pohl, I. Wood and H. Reimitz (eds.) *The Transformation of Frontiers: From Late antiquity to the Carolingians* (Leiden 2001) p. 44-6

134 Whittaker, C. M. *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, (Baltimore 1994), p. 220

135 Heather (2009), p. 77-8

136 Shaw, B. D. "War and Violence", in Bowersock, G. W., Brown, P. & Grabar, O. *Late Antiquity: A guide to the postclassical world* (1999), p. 156-160

137 Hedeager, L. "Empire, frontier and the barbarian hinterland: Rome and northern Europe from AD 1-400", in Rowlands, M., Larsen, M. & Kristiansen, K. (eds.), *Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World*, (Cambridge 1987) p. 132-139

In social-psychological perspective, it is clear that material products were not the only things being transported across the highly volatile border regions. There was also a grim traffic in violent experiences across the frontier with deep and lasting psychological repercussions for all involved. The lands beyond the Rhine, in particular, were periodically exposed to punitive campaigns of destruction and enslavement by massed imperial armies in the course of imperial "frontier management"[138]. The consistency of these activities across regimes, as well as their medium-term political effectiveness, has been pointed out.[139] However, in the face of totally one-sided accounts, there are reasons for pessimism both regarding the justifications and the long-term results of imperial campaigns. The ideology of military victory was so strong, so fundamental to imperial prestige, that historians and panegyricists felt no shame in claiming that their emperors were not merely looking to restore order in Gaul, but was also spoiling for a bloody fight.[140] The frequency with which civilian populations were apparently surprised by the legions implies that many of the regions caught up in these 'reprisals' had not been participants in the prior provocations.[141]

However, even if the Roman justifications for their periodic massive military incursions into barbarian territory were questionable, we should be careful not to under-estimate the damage done by Germanic raiders who crossed the Rhine in search of combat and plunder. Archaeological traces of raiding loot confirms the impression that attacks from east of the Rhine, which were ordinarily carried out by small raiding-parties, were often undocumented.[142] The inveterate continuity of barbarian attacks on the empire, in spite of strong defences, crushing defeats

138 Heather (2001), p. 20-23; Seager, R. "Roman policy on the Rhine and Danube in Ammianus", in *The Classical Quarterly*, 49:2 (1999), p. 579

139 Heather (2001), p. 67-8; for the development of the frontier prior to the fourth century, see Wilkes, J. "Provinces and Frontiers", in *CAH* vol. 12 (2005)

140 Lee (2012), p. 37-50; cf. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, (1990), p. 36-41; Whittaker (1994), p. 208. In his characterization of Julian, Ammianus reveals the ideological dimension of these campaigns… "Urged on by his native energy, he dreamed of the din of battle and the slaughter of savages."Ammianus, XVI.1; see also, *Pan.Lat.* VI.11, 16, where imperial reluctance to participate in civil war is contrasted with the unhesitating and cruel destruction of the Franks and their leaders.

141 *Pan.Lat.* VI.12; Ammianus XVI.11; Zosimus III.68. The *Historia Augusta* claims that Probus instituted a policy of offering rewards for severed barbarian heads to the soldiers – *Probus* XIV

142 Heather, P. "Imperial centre and northwest frontier, A.D. 300-476" (Unpublished), p. 7-10 & n. 21

and vicious retaliatory campaigns of terror and destruction north of the *limes*, is difficult to explain in terms of clear-eyed strategy.[143] This raises a significant but neglected question: given their terrible consequences and frequently disastrous outcomes, why did these attacks continue?

One incident in Ammianus, which gives a momentary glimpse of a barbarian viewpoint on tit-for-tat conflict across the frontier, may be instructive. The Quadi, challenged by an enraged emperor Valentinian to justify their pleas for peace, "gave *the usual series of excuses*... They declared that there had been *no common consent of the chiefs* of their race in any wrong that had been done us, but that the hostile acts had been committed by bands of foreign brigands dwelling near the river."[144] Ammianus seems incredulous toward these denials of responsibility by the Quadi leadership for attacks across the frontier, and it may be that they were falsely pleading their innocence in this case.[145] But the scene is far more interesting for what it highlights in military affairs at the frontier, which comes through consistently in the sources. The larger political and ethnic units north of the *limes*, even if joined by some basic bonds of political loyalty, did not possess the degree of organizational capacity or unity necessary to control the actions of the small fighting groups from the which the larger army was occasionally composed. Even Roman military commanders enjoyed considerable freedom of action in the absence of the emperor.[146] This made it consistently likely – from either side of the frontier – that some group or other would cross over in search of plunder without the consent or knowledge of the wider community. But reprisals on both sides were innately unlikely to recognise these distinctions. In fact, when the legions arrived in force, the very people for whom they were ostensibly looking – inevitably highly mobile groups of men of fighting age – would be the least likely to fall victim to the consequences of their

143 Elton, H. "Imperial Campaigns between Diocletian and Honorius, A.D. 284-423: The Rhine Frontier and the Western Provinces", in Sarantis, A. and Christie, N. (eds.) *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives* (Leiden 2013), p. 656-660; Sarantis, A. "Waging war in Late Antiquity", in A. Sarantis and N. Christie (eds.), (2013), p. 22-3; *Pan.Lat.* VII.4

144 Ammianus XXX.6

145 Ibid.

146 Heather (2001), p. 40

actions. Instead, the most vulnerable non-combatants would have been the most likely victims on both sides.[147]

Thus, while raids into the empire formed a less-than-zero sum game for the populations north of the *limes* as a whole, they could still be highly profitable to the groups that undertook them, who were generally capable of avoiding the brunt of the empire's military retaliations. However, the assumption that barbarian raids and larger attacks were motivated by economic gain and glory cannot be taken for granted.[148] Clearly, there was much wealth to be plundered within the empire. But equally clearly, northern Gaul was less abundantly stocked with precious objects in the late-third and fourth centuries than it had been in the second, and raiding armies and smaller groups were frequently caught, defeated and enslaved or slaughtered unmercifully. Even if they escaped the empire unscathed and avoided the inevitable reprisals, their extended families and communities would be liable to suffer severely. Such likely consequences could hardly be justified by the hope of modest economic gain. What all this suggests is that among the Franks, the profits of raiding had acquired a social value that far exceeded their purchasing power. And that this value was closely associated with the violence by which they were acquired.

The population north of the Rhine was therefore relatively exposed to the psychological consequences of extreme violence. And, as importantly in terms of the development of violent subcultures, Roman attacks and economic incentives to violence were probably interacting with a pre-existing set of Germanic social mores that already prized martial courage and ability highly.[149] Of course, we cannot be sure of the accuracy of Tacitus' reports of Germanic social life in the early phases of contact with the empire.[150] He was quite certainly ensconced in Roman prejudices regarding the northern barbarians, and the agenda of glorious warfare and military recruitment by which they were driven. But his description

147 For instance, Ammianus XVIII.2

148 See Chapter 1.

149 Green, D. H. *Language and History in the Early Germanic World* (Cambridge 1998), p. 67; Tacitus, *Germania* VI-VIII, XIV

150 For criticism of Tacitus' evidence and its use in assessing the early Germans, see for instance, Goffart, W. "Two notes on Germanic antiquity today", in *Traditio* 50 (1995), 9-30; cf. O'Gorman, E. "No place like Rome: Identity and difference in the *Germania* of Tacitus", in Ash, R (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Tacitus* (Oxford 2012)

of Roman relations with the Batavi – who were destined to remain in service to the empire for another four centuries – is highly instructive in terms of the Roman input to Germanic social development: "…they are not subjected to the indignity of tribute or ground down by the tax-gatherer...they are like weapons and armour – 'only to be used in war'".[151] This brief statement distils Roman prejudice and the invidious position in which it placed the tribes of the northern frontiers over which the empire loomed so large. The only way to avoid subjugation and humiliation at the hands of the empire – on both a personal and collective level – was the warrior lifestyle, because warriors were the only uniquely valuable human resource that the frontiers could provide.[152] By becoming the violent archetype of the Roman imagination, Germans could at least become valuable and highly prized creatures, rather than a disdained and abject chattels.

In the previous chapter, we saw how Lonnie Athens identified "violent notoriety" as a key basis for identity among persistently violent individuals.[153] The evident fear and respect commanded by a dangerous reputation is a powerful basis of self-perception, which can be very difficult to shake off even when it also comes attached to all the attendant inconveniences and dangers of existence as part of an officially proscribed criminal subculture. An elite Germanic warrior faced greater dangers still, but like some modern criminal groups, they also enjoyed unchallenged supremacy in their local milieus. And if the Roman empire sometimes hunted these warriors and sought their destruction, they equally sometimes sought their service and favoured them with gifts and preferential treatment relative to other, non-militarized barbarians.

By defining the *utilitas* of the Germanic peoples according to their capacities for armed combat, the Roman empire was creating powerful psychological factors driving violent behaviour among the tribal elites around the Rhine, effectively pushing the process of elite identity-formation toward an exclusively militant model. If Germanic elites wished to be recognized and taken seriously

151 Tacitus, *Germania* XXIX

152 Shaw (1999), p. 159, concludes that through these systematic incentives, violence "became part of the frontier groups' learned behaviour".

153 Chapter 1, p. 15

by their Roman counterparts, the empire made it consistently clear that this could only be achieved by proving their military worth. We are provided with precious little evidence of non-military elites in the Roman sources, but the rare first-century example given by Tacitus of revered women credited with prophetic powers, finds no parallels in accounts of the Germanic tribes from the third century onward.[154] More concretely, evidence of the shifting nomenclature of leadership betrays the increasingly militarized character of Germanic elites into the fourth century.[155] Thus, contact with the empire was acting as a powerful stimulant for the development of violent behavioural profiles among the Germans. To the extent that Frankish identity was a novelty, subsuming other more ancient identities which had existed since at least the early imperial period, it is likely that is its military and violent connotations exceeded those of the cultures encountered by Tacitus.

Frankish armies burst onto the Roman scene in an incredibly audacious, albeit strategically inept, campaign of raiding that penetrated as far as the Mediterranean in the later third century.[156] The Frankish incursions were a somewhat belated contribution to a much wider malaise that gripped the empire in the third century, in which the frontiers were compromised in both east and west, Roman armies oscillated between external warfare and internal rebellions, and small armies of *latrones* – sometimes called *Bagaudae* or *Bacaudae* – terrorized the countryside.[157] Throughout this period, the Roman armies were instrumental not just in dealing with the chaos, but also in causing it in the first

154 Tacitus, *Histories* IV.61. The later evidence of Gregory of Tours implies that such customs were not totally eradicated – see *Histories* V.14; VII.44; VIII.33

155 See Green (1998) p. 128-136; Heather (2009), p. 46, 65

156 Todd, M. *The Early Germans*, (Hoboken 2009), p. 180-181; *Pan.Lat.* IV.17; Aurelius Victor, XXXIII

157 Ibid. XXVI-XXXIII; Southern, P. *The Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine* (New York 2001), p. 83-210. There is considerable debate over the social character of the *Bagaudae*/*Bacaudae* (see Halsall 2007 p. 218, for a summary). Their Celtic-sounding name has given rise to etymological speculation that they were a quasi-ethnic group, but this has been substantively questioned on the basis of possible errors in manuscript transmission – see Minor, C. E. "Bacaudae: A reconsideration", in *Traditio* 51 (1996), p. 297-304. However, a reference in Salvian, though it confirms Minor's impression of the correct spelling, tends to reinforce the idea that the *Bacaudae* were (at least by the fifth century) culturally distinct to the point where they might be thought of as barbarians – Salvian, *De Gubernatione Dei*, V.5. See next chapter, n. 302

place.[158] The majority of emperors were chosen by the armies they led in the field, and died at the hands of assassins from within the ranks of their own disaffected legions. The later-3rd century in particular yields considerable archaeological evidence of destruction, including a glut of coin-hoards within the empire, pointing to increased economic insecurity. And these were particularly clustered between the Seine and Rhine, indicating that this was the zone exposed to the most intensive disruption in the late third century.[159]

A series of military reorganizations, combined with effective campaigning between the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, restored a measure of political stability to empire and frontier in the fourth century.[160] The military also became a more ubiquitous presence in Northern provinces as a biproduct of the efforts to create a more effective system of defence and minimize the disruptive tendencies of massed frontier legions, as larger units were broken down and distributed more widely across Gaul.[161] Large mobile *comitatenses* were billeted on cities, while the ordinary work of frontier defence was done by less elite local forces of *limitanei*. The threat of the Franks was turned to the empire's advantage, as a series of aggressive imperial campaigns between the late-third and early-fourth centuries repeatedly denuded their heartlands of warriors, many of whom were used to fill the ranks of the depleted Roman armies.[162]

The experiences of the third century not only led to military reforms, but also permanently changed the landscape and society of the regions within striking distance of the frontiers. Not only were fortifications on the *limes* renewed and enhanced, but local populations which had relied on the *pax Romana* for their security increasingly looked to their own defence, tending to fortify themselves

158 See de Blois, L. "The military factor in the onset of crises in the Roman empire in the third century AD", in L. de Blois & E. lo Castro (eds.), *The Impact of the Roman Army (200 BC–476 AD)*, (Leiden 2007), p. 497-509

159 Cleary, S. E. *The Roman West, AD 200-500: An Archaeological Study* (Cambridge 2013), p. 32-39; Whittaker, "Landlords and Warlords", in J. Rich and G. Shipley (eds.), *War and Society in the Roman World* (London 1993), p. 292; Wightman, E. M. *Gallia Belgica*, (Manchester 1985), p. 196-7.

160 Lee (2007), p. 10-11

161 Cleary (2013), p. 43

162 *Historia Augusta: Probus*, XIII; Zosimus 1.68; *Pan.Lat.* VI.12; VII.4; VIII.9; Lee (2007), p. 413-415, against the opinion of Zosimus 2.33.

with ditches, towers and walls.[163] And in the fourth century these regions remained relatively economically and demographically retarded, never fully regaining the prosperity achieved in the second century.[164] Trier and its environs were exceptional in this respect, having been made the seat of imperial power in region, and a few other urban centres recovered somewhat. But where the emperor and his armies did not act as patrons, urban populations north of the Loire declined and such quintessentially Roman crafts as mosaic and monumental architecture in stone died out.[165] Several regions of northern Gaul were virtually abandoned and had to be repopulated with barbarian settlers, and the villa was widely replaced with other cruder architectural forms more reminiscent of pre-Roman or contemporary German examples.[166] The failure of northern Gaul to ever recover fully after the crises of the third century provides circumstantial support for the notion that the region was troubled by small-scale raiding that generally went under radar of the narrative sources.[167]

Auxiliaries and federate groups still revolved around a core of soldiers recruited and trained within the empire.[168] But the social profile of the army had

163 Wilkes (2005), p. 258-260; Schonberger, H. "The Roman Frontier in Germany: An archaeological survey", in *The Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 59, no. 1/2 (1969), p. 144-197, p. 178-186; Wightman (1985), p. 222; Whittaker (1993), p. 292; Sarantis, A. and Christie, N. "Fortifications in the West: A bibliographical essay", in A. Sarantis and N. Christie (eds.), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 2013), p. 268-277. Some of these fortifications were not very effective, but their frequently hasty construction, using *spolia* from fine Roman architecture and funerary monuments, illustrates that they were not mere exercises in civic display. For evidence of fortification of private residences, which tended to focus on the defence of food storage facilities, see Van Ossel, P. & Ouzoulias, P. 'Rural settlement economy in Northern Gaul in the Late Empire: an overview', in *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 13 (2000), p. 143-6

164 Wightman (1985), p. 227-246; Halsall (2007), p. 83-86, 346-9. For a good summary of the difficulties and shortcomings of the archaeological evidence (many of which stem from the regional diversity in quantity and quality of archaeological work), which nonetheless concludes that there was indeed an overall fall in settlements in the period, see Van Ossel & Ouzoulias (2000), p. 134-8

165 Ibid.; Cleary (2013), p. 94-5. Constantine's decree of 320, freeing veterans from participation in public works, may have contributed to this problem – *Cod.Theo.* VII.20.2

166 *Pan. Lat.* VIII.18 lists "the territory of the Ambiani [Amiens], Bellovaci [Beauvais], Tricasses [Troyes], and Lingones [Langres]" as the worst affected by abandonment of agricultural land. See Wightman (1985), p. 229-230. For archaeological evidence in the Aisne valley, see Haselgrove, C. 'La Romanisation de l'Habitat Rural dans la Vallée de l'Aisne d'Aprés les Prospectations de Surface et les Fouilles Récentes', in *Revue Archeologique de Picardie Special*, 11 (1996), p. 109-114

167 Wightman (1985), p. 246

168 Elton (2013), p. 659-660; There is considerable debate around this point, which generally revolves around the weight placed on the various impressionistic surmises contained in the narrative evidence. See, for instance Lee (2009), p. 12; Liebeschuetz (2006), p. 266

been shifting in other, possibly more significant ways, since the early third century. The conceptual link between citizenship and honourable service in the military had deteriorated, senators no longer took military commands, and the recruitment base of the army was increasingly "narrow and regionally specific" to the regions close to the frontiers.[169] Equipment characteristic of Roman armies had altered considerably by the late fourth century. Shields had become rounder and lighter, while the short *gladius* was replaced by the longer and more characteristically Germanic *spatha* as the principle side-arm.[170] The cause of these changes – which made the Roman soldiers appear less distinct from their barbarian allies – is not discussed in the written sources, but it is not unreasonable to infer that they were associated with the cultural influence of Germanic military traditions on the Roman armies.[171] And their practical and psychological implications for massed ranks in combat would have been profound. The rounder shield impeded the ability of closely packed soldiers to form an impenetrable wall of shields, whilst facilitating greater freedom of movement to the individual fighter. The longer sword, similarly, made fighting in tight formations awkward, being better suited to slashing attacks the required greater clearance, while providing the individual warrior with better reach.[172] Roman armour remained superior both in quality and quantity to their barbarian adversaries.[173] But in psychological terms, the move toward longer swords and rounder shields served to isolate the individual from the wider unit on the battlefield, increasingly forcing him to fall back on his own physical and psychological resources rather than being subsumed into the crowd.[174]

169 Liebeschuetz, W. "Citizen status and law in the Roman empire and the Visigothic kingdom", from W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction: the construction of ethnic communities, 300-800* (Leiden 1998), p. 135-8; Jones (1966), p. 219, citing Vegetius; Shaw 1999, p. 135

170 See Southern, P. & Dixon, K. R., *The Late Roman Army* (New Haven 1996), p. 89-127; Coulston, J. C. N. "Late Roman military equipment culture", in Sarantis and Christie (2013), p. 475-482; Kazanski, M. "Barbarian Military Equipment", in A. Serantis and N. Christie (eds.), (2013), p. 504

171 Although other influences, including internal evolution, were also significant – Coulston (2013), p. 475-482

172 cf. Kazanski (2013), p. 501. Vegetius' advice, "not to cut but to thrust with the sword", which self-consciously harks back to ancient military convention, adds to the impression that the image of a tightly packed formation based on efficient sword-thrusts was an anachronism by this time – Vegetius IX.11

173 Kazanski (2013), p. 503

174 Attempts to link shields were ineffective against the Alamanni at Strasbourg (357), and the Goths in 376 – Ammianus, XVI.12.36, 44; XXXI.7.12

Both close to the Rhine and much further south, Franks and other barbarians became an integral part of the refounded military establishment from at least the time of their participation in Constantine's seizure of sole power by military force. By the middle of the fourth century the highest offices of the Roman military were frequently held by men of barbarian stock, and a general of partly Frankish descent, Silvanus, was "traversing Gaul in the service of the government and driving forth the savages" at the head of Rome's armies. He could claim a proud tradition of military service inherited from his father, who had fought under Constantine.[175] In a more spectacular example, Charietto, a probable Alaman living in the Trier region, was apparently able to rise from the leader of a freelance band of head-hunters to the position of *comes per utramque Germaniam* in the space of just a few years.[176]

The sources provide no certainty over the technical conditions upon which Frankish and other barbarian settlers were integrated into the military establishment, and the process by which they ascended to the highest commands is obscure. Certainly, the evidence of named tribunes does not find a significant proportion of barbarians lower down the chain of command.[177] The lack of technical precision in the sources may be a partial result of irregular and ad-hoc arrangements that saw some Franks being enrolled as complete auxiliary units, while others were split up and settled as *laeti*, or enrolled in the regular army.[178] The possibility arises that Constantine and his successors elevated Franks directly to the upper commands, without them first passing through the lower echelons of the command structure.

In psychological perspective, the rapid rise of some Franks through the ranks of the Roman armies in the fourth century should be placed firmly in the context of their exceptionally intense exposure to Roman military violence, both as

175 Ammianus, XV.5; Geary (1999), p. 114-116.
176 Zosimus, III.71; Ammianus XXVII.1; Whittaker (1994), p. 192-3. See below, note 189-191
177 Although this lack of barbarian names among tribunes may have more to do with epigraphic, as opposed to ethnic, conditions. See Jones (1964), p. 135
178 One unit of *laeti* are referred to as *Franci*, although this implies that most were not thought of as such. There are also a considerable number of individuals with Germanic names in the ranks of the ostensibly Roman units – Jones (1964), p. 620

victims and perpetrators, from the late-3rd century onward. The Frankish groups that raided into the empire in the 260s cannot have represented more than a fraction of total, but all were punished together when successive emperors embarked on campaigns of destruction across the Rhine, carrying away many young men to fight in their armies.[179] Politically, these campaigns, combined with the extra fortifications established by the early fourth century, may have achieved the aim of persuading the Frankish leadership that incursions deep into the empire were a very bad idea. It is even possible that the Roman attacks were so successful that a whole generation of elite Frankish warriors were either killed, co-opted or enrolled into the Roman armies, for the lower Rhine region apparently saw no more major conflict for a generation after Constantine's campaigns.[180] But in the long term, they did nothing to diminish, and may indeed have substantially aggravated, the propensity of the Frankish domains to produce an abundance of warriors.

In terms of grand strategy, the diffusion of military forces through the interior, and stationing of the largest army groups well within the empire, was a success: when the Franks and Alamanni again attacked in force in the mid-fourth century, their penetration into the empire was much shallower than their third-century predecessors.[181] But it also represented a change in priorities by which the regions closest to the frontiers – Belgica and northern Gaul – were effectively treated as a kind of buffer zone for the interior, and small-scale, shallow breaches of the frontier were accepted as unfortunate inevitabilities. Such incidents are not much mentioned in the narrative sources, but the emphasis of the narrative sources is apt to entirely miss the kind of small-scale raiding that other evidence implies may have been the bread-and-butter of conflict across the frontier.[182]

179 Geary 1999, p. 114; Elton (2013); Constantine and Magnentius were particularly prolific in drafting Franks into the armies – Whittaker (1994), p. 230

180 Although the frontier may not have been as quiet as the narrative evidence suggests. Constans celebrated a triumph over the Rhine barbarians in 342 – Blockley, R. C. "Warfare and Diplomacy", in A. Cameron and P. Garnsey (eds.) *The Cambridge Ancient History, 13: The Late Empire, AD 337-425* (Cambridge University, 1998), p. 421. And see below.

181 Ammianus XV-XVII; Julian, "Letter to the Senate and People of Athens", in W. C. Wright (ed. and trans.) *Works*, 2 Volumes, (London 1913). See below.

182 Whittaker (1994), p. 194-242

Thus, by the later-fourth century, military establishments on both sides of the Rhine had been substantially remodelled. The barbarian groups had been subsumed into broader ethnic-political affiliations, under the influence of Roman stimulus, cultural, economic and (we must now add in psychological perspective) experiential. Meanwhile the northern Roman armies had devolved into smaller units and been distributed across northern Gaul, integrating themselves into communities and barbarians into the military command structure.[183] A denser network of fortifications had sprung up across the region. And much of the region was demographically and culturally altered by widespread displacement and resettlement.

2.2 – Barbarians, Provincials and Frontier armies in the later fourth century

After the campaigns of Constantine, which may have substantially depopulated large areas north of the Rhine in the short term,[184] the threat of attack *en masse* by the northern barbarians was temporarily extinguished. But they returned in force in the 350s, first as supporters and opponents of the imperial usurper Magnentius, and then as independent groups.[185] For the third quarter of the fourth century, we are provided with an unusually large quantity of information regarding military affairs in Gaul. The archaeological remains, *Notitia Dignitatum*, laws and panegyrics are complemented by the relatively detailed narrative accounts of Ammianus and several other near-contemporary writers.[186] This allows us to see a little more of the Franks, and very much more of the Roman armies. And what emerges from this more detailed picture is an impression of the regions close to the frontier as a special zone, which was more exposed to violence than the inner empire, and produced a relative abundance of military recruits who were regarded as particularly enthusiastic fighters.

183 Jones (1964), p. 125; Sarantis (2013), p. 2

184 *Pan.Lat* VI.12 - “Now you do not even dare to live at a distance from the Rhine, and can scarcely drink in safety from the rivers of the interior…”

185 Whittaker (1994), p. 161, citing Libanius, Oration 18.33-35 (“Funeral Oration for Julian”), in A. F. Norman (trans.), *Selected Orations* (Cambridge, Mass. 2003)

186 See Jones (1964), p. 115

The devastation inflicted by the late-fourth century incursions of the Franks and Alamanni was confined much more strictly to northern Gaul, affecting forty-five cities and extending approximately 170km from the Rhine frontier, according to the eyewitness account of the emperor Julian.[187] The threat was also largely diffuse, and with the disastrous exception of the battle of Strasbourg, the barbarians tended to avoid massing in their thousands, complicating the task faced by the Roman forces. A Frankish raiding party of six hundred men, mentioned in Ammianus, Zosimus and in a panegyric for Julian (which duly inflates the numbers of Franks) exemplifies this problem, as well as the difficulty in assessing the narrative evidence for barbarian military activity.[188] This group, too large to thought of as an ordinary band of *latrones*, but too small to be described as a major army, only comes to the attention of the sources at the point of coming into contact with the all-conquering emperor and his forces. Even such a substantial group was unlikely to have attracted the attention of the Roman narrative sources, had they not happened to cause a substantial problem for the imperial army by taking up residence in some abandoned fortifications and holding out under siege for nearly two months.

A further illustration of the threat posed by small, mobile raiding groups to northern Gaul is provided by the story of one Charietto, related by Zosimus. This barbarian had settled permanently in the Trier region, and turned his hand to attacking raiding groups of his fellows on behalf of the beleaguered local towns, returning with the severed heads of the bandits. Soon Charietto is leading a large group of men, "robbers" as Zosimus would have it, destroying raiding parties throughout the area. When the group present themselves before Julian, he does not hesitate to grant them imperial sanction, since he is "...at this time unable to restrain the nocturnal and clandestine incursions of the barbarians, as they robbed in small parties, straggling from each other, and when day appeared, not one of them was visible, all hiding themselves in the woods, and subsisting on

187 Julian, "Letter to the Athenians" - "...those who were settled nearest to us were as much as three hundred stades from the banks of the Rhine, and a district three times as wide as that had been left a desert by their raids; so that the Gauls could not even pasture their cattle there." The Alf valley region, upstream from Trier, was particularly severely devastated – Van Ossel and Ouzoulias (2000), p. 138

188 Ammianus XVII.2; Libanius, *Oration* 18

what they gained by robbery."[189] The implication – which finds support in a law of Constantius which sought to deal with banditry by veterans – is that not only was the state struggling to contain raiding across the border, but also that independent armed groups were operating within the frontier, sometimes with the tacit or explicit approval of the authorities.[190] Libanius praised Julian's decision to offer rewards for barbarian heads,[191] but if Zosimus is to be believed, this was a practice accepted as a *fait accompli* rather than a policy imposed from above. Although such measures were apparently effective, they nonetheless represented an acceptance of the proliferation of independent armed groups, and the increasingly imperfect imperial control over its own armed forces. Ammianus's report of an upsurge in banditry in Gaul during the reign of Valentinian suggests the difficulty of confining the violence of these groups to legitimate targets.[192]

All of this hints that Julian's large-scale northern campaigns were not entirely based on strategic concerns, but in fact proceeded more from the political and military exigencies of imperial rule over Gaul and its armies. Julian's campaign against the Salian Franks is justified with reference to their importunate occupation of Toxandria, which cut Julian's forces off from British supply ships in the mouth of the Rhine,[193] but it is not clear that the Salii had occupied the region by violence. According to Zosimus, the Salii had arrived as refugees after a vicious war against the Saxons had driven them from Batavia, a territory which

189 Zosimus III.70-71. A person of the same name, and a similar description, is describes by Ammianus as a *comes* in the frontier army a short time later, in a possible illustration of the potential for barbarians to be promoted directly to senior commands – Ammianus XXVII.1; Whittaker (1994), p. 202

190 Cod.Theo VII.20.7; Southern & Dixon (1996), p. 43; Whittaker (1994), p. 192-228

191 Libanius, *Oration* 18 - "and a great eagerness for cutting off heads was the natural result – for that most clever man purged their souls of cowardice with the lust of gain, and the wish to get something incited them to be courageous."

192 Ammianus, XXVIII.2 - "...throughout Gaul there spread, to the ruin of many, a savage frenzy for brigandage, which kept watch of the frequented roads and fell indiscriminately upon everything profitable that fell in its way." Symmachus' panegyric for Valentianian (c. 360), confirms the impression that northern Gaul was regarded as a particularly troubled region after Julian's campaigns - "For you there are no holidays from combat and you chose this above all in Gaul, that here one may not be at rest: necessity grants you no truce. Now you bring the lustrum of your regnal years to a close where an equal chill envelops earth and sky, under dense clouds, perpetual cold, fierce enemies, devastation far and wide." – *Orations* I: to Valentinian (trans. B. S. Rodgers 2009)

193 Ammianus XVII.8. See Heather, "Northwest" (2018), p. 12-13

they may have already held with Roman permission.[194] Ammianus makes no secret of the fact that the Salian pleas for peace are totally ignored by Julian, who indeed uses a false treaty to set up a lightning ambush of the already quiescent, and totally unprepared, Franks. The same treatment – a false peace followed by sudden attack on the unprepared enemy – is inflicted on the Chamavi immediately afterward. The words of Vegetius, alluded to in the previous chapter, positively ring in the ears - "...he [the general] must watch for the opportunity when the enemy… think themselves in security, and attack them with detachments of tried cavalry or infantry, intermingled with young soldiers, or such as are under the military age…"[195] Julian's hastily reconstituted forces must have included not a few such "young soldiers", in need of blooding through such easy military victories.

A further exigency of Roman military leadership at the frontier is illustrated by Julian's problems in keeping the large armies supplied and compliant. Ammianus tells us that the army became seditious in the face of Julian's attempts to stretch their supplies further by storing a portion of them in local forts. Julian hoped that "what had been deducted might be replaced from the harvests of the Chamavi",[196] but since these harvests were not yet ripe the soldiers were going hungry. Thus the Chamavi are revealed as not merely a troublesome people being punished by Roman might, but also a potentially vital source of plunder by which the Roman army was being maintained. If the suggestion that Constantius had sent no pay to the northern armies for some time is correct,[197] it is probable that such supply problems were a more pressing spur to military action than any immediate provocation on the part of the Chamavi or the Salii.

In social-psychological perspective, the most significant point that emerges occasionally from the detailed narrative evidence provided by Ammianus is the fact that bellicosity of the soldiers was not simply confined to the targets designated by imperial fiat. In consequence, the rank-and-file and the minor commanders who led them enjoyed considerable agency, and exerted

194 Zosimus III.70-71
195 Vegetius III.9
196 "nec donativum nec stipendium" - Ammianus XVII.8-9
197 Ammianus XVII.8

considerable influence, in terms of military decision-making and outcomes. The Roman Frankish general Silvanus, having declared independence from the emperor, is egged on by "the uproarious complaints of the soldiers on every hand, pleading their destitution and eager to burst through the passes of the Cottian Alps with all speed."[198] And 'uproarious' remains the adjective that best describes the atmosphere of the army whenever the rank-and-file come into view in Ammianus' account through Julian's reign and after. They clash their shields to acclaim Julian's elevation to supreme command, as they also do to register their dissatisfaction in other circumstances.[199] And the rumour of his death sends some units into a murderous frenzy, which is only calmed by his personal appearance.[200] When lack of supplies caused hunger, the troops, "resorting to outrageous threats...assailed Julian with foul names and opprobrious language, calling him an Asiatic, a Greekling and a deceiver, and a fool with a show of wisdom." No punishment is apparently meted out for these excesses and seditious words, which are taken quite in stride by Ammianus, "as some are usually to be found among the soldiers who are noteworthy for their volubility".[201] It was frequently the soldiers who pushed for engagement with the enemy against the better judgement of their generals, and more often than not they got their way.[202]

Thus levels of insubordination that would be viewed as signs of exceptional and cataclysmic crisis in any modern military establishment are portrayed by Ammianus as the more-or-less ordinary rough and tumble of military command. Further examples of generals acting under apparent duress from the army abound in the late empire, the most famous being the usurpation of Constantine III, the third man in a year to be elevated to power by the British legions.[203] The overall impression is that military policy periodically came under the influence of the

198 Ammianus XV.5

199 According to Ammianus, such rowdy behaviour was so ordinary as to enjoy its own syntax – Ammianus XV.8

200 Ammianus XX.4

201 Ammianus XVII.8

202 Seager (1999), p. 589

203 Zosimus, VI; and also for instance, Ammianus XXX.10; cf. Hydatius 84 (430). It is also likely that the revolt of Silvanus was a result of unrest among his troops – see den Boer, W. "The Emperor Silvanus and his army", in *Acta Classica* vol.3 (1960). In 397 the Gallic soldiers, in another period of relative inactivity, killed the Praetorian Prefect, Exuperantius, in a mutiny at Arles – Prosper, *Chronicon*, a.424 (Castinus & Victor)

masses of armed men whom the generals ostensibly commanded, especially under conditions in which pay was in short supply. But even where they were not dominant, the feelings of the rank-and-file, affected as they were by all the factors listed at the beginning of the chapter, were an important driving force behind military decision-making. Even when his army is compliant, Julian refuses to march them through the territory of tribes with whom he is at peace, "...for fear that (as often happens) through the rudeness of the soldiers, destroying everything in their way, the treaties might be abruptly broken."[204] This destructiveness, and the general turbulence of soldiers' behaviour,[205] should be located firmly in the context of the psychological pressures and shocks entailed in military life.

2.3 – Frankish and Gallic armed forces in the later fourth century: How 'barbarian', how 'Roman'?

One theme that has pervaded debate around the decline of the Western Empire is the question of the nature and extent of "barbarization" in the Roman armies and the regions closest to the northern frontiers. A formerly popular view, still maintained by some historians, is that the Roman armies came to be increasingly dominated by barbarian elements during the fourth century. And, following the opinions of the likes of Zosimus and Vegetius, barbarian influence is seen to have contributed substantially to a loss of discipline and effectiveness that in turn facilitated serious military defeats and the collapse of the frontiers in the late-fourth and fifth centuries.[206] But most historians now consider this position to be ill-founded, relying as it does on a few scattered contemporary opinions with no particular claims to expertise. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that the Roman armies were still larger, better supplied and more effective than their northern adversaries in the fourth century, and the accounts of military insider

204 Ammianus XVIII.2.7; see also XXVII.10. This was not an invariable tendency – Ammianus XVIII.2

205 See Lee (2012), p. 168-173

206 For a recent summary, see Carey, B. T. et al, *Warfare in the Ancient World*, (2005), p. 136-148

Ammianus give no clear indications that barbarian influence undermined military unity or effectiveness.[207]

Nonetheless, northern Gaul and the Gallic armies do appear to have undergone some substantial cultural changes by the later fourth century, which emerge in contemporary narrative, legal and archaeological evidence. These developments were indeed thematically associated with *barbaricum*,[208] and this association may be regarded as at least partially an outcome of a subtle transformation of Roman prejudices regarding the barbarians since the early empire. Writers of the Principiate, whose views are echoed in the anachronistic musings of Vegetius, characterized the barbarians as physically powerful, impetuous and ferocious, but ultimately inferior to the Romans in war due to their irrationality and unpredictability.[209] Roman legionaries were better able to tough it out under the stresses of long campaigns and pitched battles because they were cool-tempered, and knew how to submit properly to the rigours of military discipline and organization that subsumed the individual warrior into the host.[210] In the early fourth century, a panegyric of Constantius still denigrated barbarian recruits as little better than slaves.[211]

But by the mid-fourth century, elite assessments of barbarian military capacities were considerably more favourable, as evinced by the rapid progress of recently imported Franks and other barbarians to some of the highest military

207 Jones, A. H. M. *The Decline of the Ancient World* (1966), p. 214; Lee, A. D. "Warfare and the State", in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (2007), p. 417-8; Elton (2013), p. 665, 674-5; Serantis (2013), p. 50-68

208 Kazanski (2013), p. 504-505, concludes on the basis of a thorough survey of weapon finds that "military equipment found in [4th century] northern Gallic tombs closely resembles that found in 'Germania'".

209 Mattern, S. P. *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principiate* (Berkeley 1999), p. 203-205, quoting Strabo, *Geography,* 7.3.17; Tacitus, *Annals* 2.14, etc; Vegetius, II - "Little can be expected from forces so dissimilar in every respect [barbarian 'auxiliaries'], since it is one of the most essential points in military undertakings that the whole army should be put in motion and governed by one and the same order. But it is almost impossible for men to act in concert under such varying and unsettled circumstances."

210 In psychological perspective we can detect in Roman culture an idealization of impassivity in the face of the horrors of battle that comes close to the modern concept of 'low-affect' and psychopathy; contrasted to an idealized barbarian disposition that is more reactive, corresponding more closely to modern concepts of 'learned' aggression. See Chapter 1, 38-40

211 *Pan.Lat.* VIII.9 - "...if he is summoned to the levy, he comes running and is crushed by discipline; he submits to the lash and congratulates himself upon his servitude [servire] by calling it soldiering [militiae]."

positions.[212] We have seen how Silvanus was admired by Ammianus as a loyal and effective general. Arbogast, eventual sponsor of the usurper Eugenius, was similarly admired by Zosimus for his courage and lack of cupidity.[213] Treaties between the empire and its northern neighbours consistently included grants of military recruits from the latter.[214] Libanius, in extolling Julian's defeat of the small Frankish raiding army mentioned earlier, testifies to the extent to which such men were prized as recruits - "...it is a law with those warriors either to conquer or perish… Now the emperor, who received these prisoners, styled them a gift, and incorporated them with his own legions, believing that he was placing amidst the latter towers of strength: so much was each of these Franks a match for many ordinary mortals!"[215]

How homogeneous were the barbarians serving in the Roman armies, and how strong were their connections to their counterparts in *barbaricum*? While the strength and unity of Frankish ethnic identity was once relatively unquestioned, the nature of the identities of this relatively new group and their contemporaries is now a matter of considerable and justified debate.[216] Archaeologically, it is impossible to identify distinct zones where the bases of Frankish power were supposed to have been located.[217] Neither do contemporary literary sources mention distinct appearances or customs that clearly separated Franks from their Gallic neighbours. This is especially true for Franks who integrated into the empire: it is impossible to tell by what means, or even if, Silvanus could be spotted for a Frank by any stranger, or if this was simply a widely known fact about his ancestry. This certainly has something to do with the nature of the available sources, which show nothing like the curiosity of Tacitus in their

212 Geary (1999), p. 115; and see above.
213 Zosimus, IV
214 Heather, P. "*Foedera* and *foederati* of the fourth century", in T. F. X. Noble (ed.), *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms* (London 2006), p. 293-302
215 Libanius, *Oration for Julian*, 144; see also, Ammianus XXXI.10**;** and Liebeschuetz (1993), p. 274-5
216 Geary (1999), p. 110; Pohl, W. "Introduction: strategies of distinction", in *Strategies of Distinction: the construction of ethnic communities, 300-800*, (Leiden 1998), p. 4
217 Theuws, F. "Grave goods, ethnicity, and the rhetoric of burial rites in Late Antique northern Gaul" in Derks, T. & Roymans, N. *Ethnic constructs in Antiquity*, (Amsterdam 2009), p. 290-296; Schmauder, M. "The relationship between Frankish *gens* and *regnum*: a proposal based on the archaeological evidence", in Goetz, H.-W., Jarnut, J. and Pohl, W. (eds.), *Regna and Gentes: The relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval* (Leiden 2003), 271-306, p. 299-302

treatment of their barbarian subjects. We must be cautious about minimizing the extent of Frankish distinctiveness simply on account of a lack of information; it is possible that it was so obvious to contemporaries that explicit descriptions seemed superfluous.

In several instances, we encounter men whose barbarian ancestry is evoked in a moment of crisis, mostly as an ideological weapon to impugn the reputation of a Romanized barbarian, and occasionally as a strategy for self-defence through identity-based solidarity. Stilicho was to be the most prominent victim of collective prejudice against barbarian ancestry, which was used to effect his downfall when his political position was weakened by military crisis.[218] And the usurpers Magnentius and Arbogast were both condemned as savage barbarians by their imperial opponents. The former, like Stilicho, was born within the Roman empire and probably had only one barbarian parent,[219] suggesting that he was well assimilated to Roman culture. Nonetheless, the apparently widely known barbarian ancestry of such men could clearly be deployed as a rhetorical strategy by their enemies.

Accounts of barbarian identity being deployed positively are much rarer, but not entirely absent.[220] Ammianus provides one striking example relating to Silvanus, who, fearing for his position in the empire, is said to have contemplated attempting to join his fellow Franks on the far side of the Rhine.[221] The fact that he was persuaded in the event to abandon the venture on the basis that the Franks would either kill him or sell him back to the Romans, is commonly held to be illustrative of the weakness of any vestigial bonds of loyalty between Romanized Franks and their barbarian counterparts. And it is possible that Ammianus was reporting a rumour that once again played on Silvanus' supposedly barbarian nature to suggest a non-existent feeling of

218 Zosimus V.159-161; Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History,* IX.4

219 Aurelius Victor, *Liber de Caesaribus* LXI, on Magnentius - "utpote gentis barbarae, diro atrocique ingenio..."; Zosimus II.64-65

220 For a thorough treatment of a number of debatable examples, see Barlow, J. "Kinship, Identity and Fourth-century Franks", in *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte*, Bd. 45, H. 2 (2nd Qtr 1996), 223-239, p. 230-238

221 Ammianus XV.5

affinity with the barbarian enemy.[222] But if Silvanus was indeed willing to contemplate such a move, the prospect arises that he did share some recognizable cultural traits with the Franks beyond the Rhine, even if Frankish solidarity that transcended the frontier was a myth. And what Ammianus does make perfectly clear is that the Franks at the court of Constantius did share a meaningful sense of solidarity with both Silvanus and each other - "Malarichus… called together the Franks, who at that time were very numerous and influential in the palace… And on learning this, the emperor decided that the matter should be investigated searchingly through the medium of his council and all his officers."[223]

The Franks and other barbarians from the beyond the Rhine were not, however, the only groups in the armies of Gaul credited with exceptional enthusiasm and aptitude for warfare. Roman citizens of Gaul, born and bred within the *limes*, were considered to possess similar attributes.[224] According to Ammianus, the Gauls were "...terrible for the fierceness of their eyes, fond of quarrelling, and of overbearing insolence… All ages are most fit for military service… Nor does anyone of them, for dread of the service of Mars, cut off his thumb, as in Italy."[225] The ethnographic flavour of the description is reminiscent of stereotyped descriptions of the barbarians, but Ammianus was not the only one to observe the unusual aggression of the Gauls, and the relatively stern penalties proscribed for Gallic self-mutilators implies their reputation had meaningful consequences in respect of Roman military policy.[226]

---

222 Jones (1964), p. 622; Liebeschuetz, J. H. W. G. *Barbarians and Bishops. Army, church and state in the age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford 1990), p. 8.

223 "Haec Malarichus...adhibitis Francis, quorum ea tempestate in palatio multitudo florebat... Hisque cognitis statuit imperator dispicientibus consistorianis et militaribus universis in negotium praeterinquiri." - Ammianus XV.5. Barlow (1996), p. 233, suggests persuasively that the fabricated plot that brought about the downfall of Silvanus, and nearly claimed his fellow Frank Malarichus, may have exploited common knowledge of solidarity among Frankish commanding officers in the imperial armies.

224 A panegyric of Constantius credits the Gauls with his victories over the northern barbarians – *Pan.Lat.* VIII.9

225 Ammianus XV.11

226 Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus* XLII - "...Gallos natura praecipites novaretur, praesertim Germanis pleraque earum partium populantibus"; Cod.Theo. VII.13.4-5 – A message to the Vicar of Rome prescribes the use of mutilated recruits in non-combat roles, while another addressed to the praetorian prefect of Gaul a year later insists that offender be burned alive.

Further evidence from Ammianus buttresses the impression that the Gallic units were somewhat culturally 'othered' and alienated from the imperial centre, particularly in respect of their turbulence and enthusiasm for combat. When referring to the army in broad terms, Ammianus does not hesitate to bracket the Gallic units, or indeed the barbarian auxiliaries which certainly also accompanied the army, with the *Romani*. But when Julian attempts to persuade the Gallic army to demure from engaging the massed Alamanni in battle until a more propitious moment, the forces are portrayed as an impatiently aggressive mob – "...The soldiers did not allow him to finish what he was saying, but gnashed their teeth and showed their eagerness for battle by striking their spears and shields together." Julian's commander, Florentius, is of the opinion that if deprived of a victory, "...the resentment of the soldiers, who, he said, are inclined by *their native hotness of temper* towards insubordination, would be impossible to withstand… they would hardly endure this without recourse to the last extremity."[227] The parallel with Ammianus' characterization of the battle-hungry Frankish commander, Mellobaudes, is striking.[228]

In the east, the 'Gallic' units are picked out by Ammianus as the most uncontrollable and combative. Besieged at Amida, "with a reasonable but untimely impulse", they insist on being allowed to make a direct attack on the numerically superior enemy -

> "And *just as ravening beasts in cages*, roused to greater fierceness by the odour of carrion, in hope of getting out dash against the revolving bars, so did they hew with swords at the gates, which (as I said above) were locked, being exceedingly anxious lest, if the city should be destroyed, they also might perish without any glorious action, or if it were saved from peril, they should be said to have done nothing worth while, *as Gallic greatness of heart demanded*; and yet before this they had made frequent sallies and

227 "...motum militis in seditiones nativo calore propensioris..." - Ammianus XVI.12

228 Ammianus XXXI.10 - "...Mallobaudes, commander of the household troops and king of the Franks, a brave man, always ready for fighting. Accordingly, while Nannienus weighed the changeable events of fortune and hence believed that they ought to act deliberately, Mallobaudes, carried away (as usual) by his strong eagerness for battle and impatient of postponement, was tormented with longing to go against the foe."

> attempted to interfere with the builders of mounds, had killed some, and had suffered the like themselves.”[229]

Commending Julian’s plan to invade Persia in force, the Gallic troops “maxime omnium…fremitu laetiore monstrabant”[230]. And in the disorderly retreat of the defeated army, now under Jovian, the Gauls emerge as the principle source of insubordinate turbulence in the ranks -

> “…the army, with mutinous bluster, demanded that they be allowed to cross the Tigris. The emperor, as well as the generals… begged them not to trust themselves to the dangerous currents, declaring that very many could not swim, and adding that the scattered bands of the enemy had beset the banks of the swollen stream in various places. But when these warnings, though several times repeated, had no effect, and the loud shouts of the excited soldiers threatened violence, Jovian reluctantly consented that *the Gauls, mingled with the northern Germans*, should enter the river first of all, to the end that *if these were swept away by the force of the stream, the obstinacy of the rest might be broken down*; or if they accomplished their purpose without harm, the rest might try to cross with greater confidence.[231]

As we have seen, turbulence, unchecked violence and insubordination were by no means a unique invention of the late imperial armies. But the Gallic units “mixti cum Germanis” are clearly identified by Ammianus as particularly fierce and prone to trouble, so much so that their removal from the host makes the rest of the army more compliant.

---

229 Ammianus XIX.5

230 Ammianus XXIII.5

231 “...exercitus vociferans inmodeste dari sibi copiam transeundi Tigridis flagitabat. Quibus oppositus cum rectoribus imperator, tumentemque iam canis exortu sideris amnem ostendens, ne se periculosis committerent gurgitibus exorabat, nandi inperitos adserens esse conplures, simulque adiciens hostiles manus hinc inde margines superfusi fluminis occupasse. Sed cum haec saepe congeminando refragaretur in cassum, milesque conclamans magno contentionis fragore minaretur extrema, id impetratur aegerrime, ut mixti cum arctois Germanis Galli amnem primi omnium penetrarent, ut his magnitudine fluentorum abreptis residuorum pertinacia frangeretur, aut si id perfecissent innocui, transitus fidentior temptaretur...” - Ammianus XXV.6

At times, Ammianus lapses into stereotyped and traditionalistic descriptions of battle, reflecting antiquated ideas about cultural and physical contrasts between the 'Roman' armies their 'barbarian' adversaries - "...the Alamanni were stronger and taller, our soldiers disciplined by long practice; they were savage and uncontrollable, our men quiet and wary, these relying on their courage, while the Germans presumed upon their huge size."[232] But the details of Ammianus' accounts of Julian's armies reveals subtleties that the binary idealizations offered in this description of battle tend to obscure, and the apparent clarity of the Roman/barbarian distinction is undermined even before it is proposed. Notwithstanding Ammianus' description of the Romans as "quiet and wary", he makes it perfectly clear that Roman success in this battle was at least partially attributable to the "Cornuti and the Brachiatti", who, "toughened by long experience in fighting, at once intimidated [the Alammani] by their gestures, and raised their mighty *baritus*."[233]

The 'Cornuti' and 'Brachiati' are two of three "fancy names" that appear among apparently recently raised auxiliary units in the campaigns of Julian. The other belongs to the 'Petulantes', who were twinned with the (also new) 'Celtae' in several of Ammianus's accounts.[234] As we have seen, the former were picked out for their contribution at the battle of Strasbourg, and were also used to launch a surprise attack on a Rhine settlement that resulted in the indiscriminate slaughter of the inhabitants.[235] Of this, Ammianus warmly approves, but he is less complementary about their role in the death of Silvanus, a man he clearly admired despite being tasked with his destruction. The Cornuti and Brachiati were identified as the units most likely to betray their commander for a hefty bribe. His characterization of them as "fluxoris fidei" precisely matches a negative barbarian stereotype cited later on in the *Res Gestae*.[236] Ammianus does

232 "...Alamanni robusti et celsiores, milites usu nimio dociles: illi feri et turbidi, hi quieti et cauti: animis isti fidentes, grandissimis illi corporibus freti." - Ammianus XVI.12

233 Ammianus XVI.12

234 Jones (1964), p. 98, who is of the opinion that these units were formed under Constantine (p. 357). There is no direct evidence to this effect, and the letter of the Petulantes may refer to the hostages reclaimed by Julian from the Franks and Alamanni in the late 350s – Julian, *Letter to the Athenians*, p. 270-272. On a possible etymology of the Brachiatti, cf. Gregory of Tours, *Lives of the Fathers* XII.2 (p. 82, n. 3)

235 Ammianus XVI.11

236 Ammianus XV.5; XVIII.2

not hesitate to include the Cornuti and others in the Roman army, but cannot fail to register, perhaps even deliberately emphasise, the barbarity of their behaviour.

We first hear of the Celtae and Petulantes when they appear as a principle bone of contention between Julian and Constantius, but report of their fearsome reputation implies that they had existed for some time. In an act that evokes a certain tension between 'Roman' and 'barbarian' identity, the Petulantes produce a "secret letter" complaining of their posting far from home, and demanding the same terms of service commonly afforded to barbarian warriors, i.e. that they not be removed to fight in distant provinces.[237] One of their standard-bearers then crowns Julian with his neck-chain, after which they are stirred into a riot by a false report of their new emperor's death, chasing the palace guards away. In a subsequent conflict with the Alammani, we find the commander Libino rashly leading the Celtae and Petulantes, "who, though fewer in nembers, were inspired with an ardent longing for battle", into an ill-fated engagement.[238] Having followed Julian to Antioch, the same groups are named and shamed as the worst offenders in a general breakdown in military discipline brought on by a surfeit of meat and alcohol.[239]

The geographical and ethnic origins of these units is unknown, and their 'fancy' names do not attach them to any specific region, but in the case of the Petulantes at least, we have a clue in the form of their letter of complaint to Julian. In it, they plead that if they are taken away from the northern frontier, "...our dear ones, whom we freed from their former captivity after mortal battles, will again be slaves to the Alamanni."[240] The implication is that the Petulantes were formed either from the remains of partially destroyed groups of *limitanei* and *laeti*, or more likely from provincials from the regions within striking distance of the frontier. As such they are likely to have included descendants of

237 "Hocque conperto apud Petulantium signa famosum quidam libellum humi proiecit occulte, inter alia multa etiam id continentem: 'nos quidem ad orbis terrarum extrema ut noxii pellimur et damnati, caritates vero nostrae Alamannis denuo servient, quas captivitate prima post internecivas liberavimus pugnas'." - Ammianus XX.4. The frequent guarantees of service close to home granted to barbarians is cited in the same chapter.

238 Ammianus XXI.3

239 Ammianus, XXII.12. They appear for a final time as participants in a victory over the Alamanni – Ammianus XXXI.10

240 "*caritates vero nostrae Alamannis denuo servient, quas captivitate prima post internecivas liberavimus pugnas'"* - Ammianus XX.4

barbarian settlers, Gauls resettled under the right of postliminium after being displaced, and military veterans of Roman origin.[241] We have already seen evidence that banditry was becoming a serious problem in Gaul in the mid- to late-fourth century, connected not just to outsiders but also potentially to veterans of the Gallic armies.[242] And Zosimus' account of Charietto's career implies that it was possible to create an armed band within the Roman frontiers by gaining a reputation for successful military adventure, without imperial assistance or even permission. These were the conditions under which at least some of the newly raised units of the later-fourth century were recruited.

Thus, the Roman empire was drawing auxiliary recruits from within its own borders, many of whom were from communities that had been violently victimized by marauding armies, and were troubled by raiding both from outside the frontiers and within them. Their deployment in river ambushes suggests that they fought in the lighter armour characteristic of traditional auxiliary troops, like the more obviously 'tribal' units, the Heruli and Batavi. And their collective solidarity and apparent common regional origin imply that they were drafted as relatively coherent regional groups. Their members were literate and were regarded, broadly, as *Romani*, but they were also perceived to be highly aggressive and turbulent. And although they were seen as Roman, they were frequently viewed – like the barbarians – with a mixture of admiration and suspicion.

None of this adds up to 'barbarization' of northern Gallic culture, however, if by barbarization what is meant is a sense of affinity between these internally-recruited auxiliaries and the barbarians. There is no evidence whatsoever that these groups shared any meaningful sense of cultural identity or corresponding solidarity with the barbarians north of the frontiers. Their names were not contrived to evoke any ancient Germanic heritage, preferring to look at back into a semi-mythological Gallic past or evoke their martial qualities. And although their loyalty to individual generals was called into question, it was never suggested that they might defect to the barbarians; in any case their commanding

241 *Pan.Lat.* VIII.18; Jones 1964, p. 685
242 See above, p. 14 and notes

officers were probably imposed from above.[243] The letter of the Petulantes and the indiscriminate slaughter of barbarians by the Cornuti suggests that, if anything, they felt even more animus toward their northern adversaries than the regulars of the *comitatenses*.

But the appearance of these units in the fourth-century armies nonetheless look like examples of military subcultures developing in northern Gaul under the influence of the barbarians, and (possibly more importantly) of Roman concepts of 'barbarian-ness' that increasingly viewed the barbarians as superior military recruits. With the breakdown of the ideological connotation of citizenship with honorable, self-motivated military service into the fourth century,[244] and the decline in real-terms pay and status for the frontier forces in particular, the pull of such relatively independent and un-Roman models was likely to increase. The barbarian enemy across the Rhine would not be viewed as a model. But the barbarians fighting for the empire, who were able to avoid camp discipline, to negotiate the terms of their service to preclude long-distance transportation, and whose identity was a potential source of solidarity in the face of the fickle power of the Roman high command, could not go unnoticed by their Gallic contemporaries.[245]

In social-psychological perspective, a further influence may be detected, namely the probable subjection of the communities from which these units were formed to the destruction and constant insecurity associated with raiding warfare. In the face of such experiences, physiological and psychological developments resulting in volatile and aggressive behaviour are predictable subsets of the range of developmental outcomes observed across cultures.[246] In traditional Roman culture, such behavioural traits were 'othered' as characteristic of the barbarian enemy, but in an era in which many suspected that barbarians made better recruits than Romans, the cultural stigma associated with such traits would have been diluted.

243 Jones (1964), p. 621
244 Liebeschuetz (1998). See above, p. 54
245 Jones (1964), p. 619-620
246 See Chapter 1, n. 87-94

2.4 – Weapon Burials in Northern Gaul

More signs of significant changes in northern Gaul may be found in the archaeological evidence, which again implies the growth of subcultures in which social and military life were increasingly elided, and a degree of regional estrangement from traditional Roman culture. We have already seen how the villa and traditional Roman crafts went into recession in the fourth century, but this loss was partially compensated by the rise of other architectural forms and handicrafts that more closely resembled the material culture of free Germany.[247] House-hall buildings and others with sunken features appear not just in Toxandria, where Franks were settling with imperial agreement, but much further south.[248] Hill-forts built both on imperial and private initiative, appeared in several regions.[249] Forms of pottery associated with the northern barbarians were increasingly present in cemeteries within the frontiers. Settlements with "non-Roman" features proliferated, but the presence of distinct Roman elements calls into question the identification of these features with barbarian settlers.[250]

The later fourth century also witnessed the beginning of new burial practices between the Rhine and the Seine (with a few appearing as far south as the Loire), which broke from Roman tradition by interring the dead with weapons in addition to more benign household objects.[251] Some historians, to some extent reading back from later Merovingian burial habits, have associated these new developments with settlements of barbarian *laeti* within the imperial frontiers in the late-third century, or otherwise with federate groups of barbarians brought into the empire in the later fourth century.[252] But since these finds do not correspond to any known contemporary equivalents on the far side of the *limes*, such theories of barbarian origins for the weapon-burials of the fourth century have fallen from favour in more recent scholarship.[253] It is additionally pointed

247 Cleary (2013), p. 93-95; Van Ossel & Ouzoulias (2000), p. 140-144, 149-151
248 For instance at Saint-Ouen-du-Breuil – Ibid, p. 391-4
249 Johnson, S. *Late Roman Fortifications* (London 1983), p. 231-288
250 Cleary (2013), p. 391-4; Rich, J. & Shipley, G. (eds.), *War and Society in the Roman World* (1993), p. 292
251 Macgeorge, P. *Late Roman Warlords*, (2002), p. 140-144; Theuws, (2009), p. 284-309
252 Early and influential exponents of these theories were, respectively, Hans-Joachim Werner and S. W. Bohn – see Heather (2009), p. 313-315; cf. Whittaker (1994), p. 220
253 Halsall (2007), p. 155-7; Heather (2009); Cleary (2013), p. 81-83; Wightman (1985), p. 253

out that such burials actually appear to have declined in frequency in precisely the period – from c. 400-450 – in which the barbarians were ostensibly pouring across the frontier and occupying Roman territories *en masse*.[254]

The difficulties of interpreting the archaeological evidence are deeper than these particular points imply, however, extending to fundamental and arguably unresolvable questions surrounding the relationship of funerary culture with living culture, and the relationship of archaeological evidence to literary evidence. Buried items cannot be seen simply as reliable reflections of the range of accoutrements sported by contemporaries, but may instead constitute a symbolic system, the syntax of which is now irretrievably lost. Furthermore, the concept of ascribing ethnic identities according to the profiles of archaeological finds has been substantively criticised as irreconcilable with the many glaring mismatches between various *gentes* painted in the sources and the archaeological cultures of northern Europe.[255] Any identification between the fourth-century weapon burials and Frankish settlement in northern Gaul must, therefore, be abandoned. But the suggestion of Franz Theuws, that these burials should not be thought of as signs of warrior culture, is much less convincing.[256] As we have seen, northern Gaul in this period was particularly exposed to banditry, raiding and warfare, and was regarded as a fertile recruiting ground for the imperial armies. The temporal and geographical association between these conditions and the burial of weapons is difficult to ignore.[257] The fact that swords, shields and helmets are not found among the early burials gives the impression that the warriors concerned were neither elite nor heavily armoured troops. But the idea that axes and spears should not be connoted to organised violence in this period tests the limits of credulity.

The minimal interpretation we are left with, then, is that these burials were the product of emerging minority warrior subcultures concentrated between the

254 Theuws (2009), p. 297
255 Ibid, p. 289-290
256 Theuws (2009), p. 308, followed by Cleary (2013), p. 83
257 Christie, N. “Wars within the frontiers: Archaeologies of rebellion, revolt and civil war”, in *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (2013), p. 953-5; James, E. “The militarization of Roman society, 400-700”, in A. N. Jorgensen & B. L. Clausen (eds.), *Military aspects of Scandinavian society in a European perspective AD 1-1300*, National Museum Studies in Archaeology and History 2 (Kopenhagen 1997), 19-24, p. 19

Seine and the Rhine, who were defining their identities in a way that diverged from Roman tradition, but were not an imitation of anything from the far side of the frontier. Their locations, which clustered around imperial military centres and on the rivers that fed into the Rhine delta and *litus Saxonicum*,[258] suggests that they were associated both with the imperial army and with independent groups raiding around the frontiers. This sits quite comfortably with what we have seen in the contemporary narrative evidence: in the army, new and revived quasi-ethnic units were emerging or had recently emerged as key components, alongside more traditional looking Roman troops and barbarian allies; while local militias were forming, drawing on both barbarian and Roman-type elements, to take on – and sometimes become – raiding parties that troubled the countryside.

In such a context, binary distinctions between Roman and barbarian seem totally inadequate to describe the spectrum of identity formation, modification and mixture suggested by the sources. This did not necessarily imply any particular political affinity between these emerging groups and *barbaricum*. But it does imply that warrior subcultures in northern Gaul were being integrated to an unprecedented extent into ordinary social life, as they were beyond the frontiers, rather than being confined to the institutional contexts traditionally defined by the Roman state.

Thus at the end of the fourth century, populations on both sides of the Rhine frontier were exceptionally exposed to raiding warfare. For the 'barbarians', this was a continuation of conditions established in the early empire. But for the 'Romans' west of the Rhine, the high degree of exposure to raiding attacks was a relatively new situation brought about by a combination of more threatening barbarian groups, military reforms, and endogenous cultural changes that tended toward militarization. The two regions underwent considerable cultural elision, driven by the sharing of artefacts and populations in both directions, but the abandonment of traditional forms of architecture and craft was more evident on

258 See Theuws (2009), fig.5 & fig.9

the Roman side of the frontier. Most importantly from our perspective, both regions apparently produced an abundant supply of warriors, whose reputation for effectiveness leant heavily on their enthusiasm for battle and unwillingness to refuse a fight, which sometimes went beyond the bounds of strategic advisability. In social-psychological perspective, these features suggest that the both regions were host to high levels of social violence and violent socialization practices.

Chapter 3: From Western Empire to Frankish kingdoms, c. 395-511

> "He who kills a free Frank or other barbarian who lives by Salic Law, and it is proved against him, shall be liable to pay eight thousand denarii, which is two hundred solidi...
>
> ...If a Roman landholder who is not a table companion of the king is killed, he who is proved to have killed him shall be liable to pay four thousand denarii."[259]

- *Lex Salica, XLI.1, 9,* c.500

This passage from the laws created by the early Frankish kingdoms marks an astonishing turnaround in the social hierarchy that had existed in northern Gaul and Germany for the best part of half a millennium. In all that time, Roman citizenship was virtually synonymous with the full protection of the law, while barbarians were frequently abused, both rhetorically and materially, as unworthy of the same consideration. Yet by the sixth century, self-declared Romans in the former provinces on the north-west had yielded pride of place in the social hierarchy to self-declared barbarians, and one group in particular: the Franks. But the Franks and their laws were not, as was once averred, an alien import superimposed the ruins of the western empire.[260] They were a product of a complicated and tumultuous process of interaction of cultural forces from either side of the frontier, which was characterized above all by the participation of dominant social groups in collective violence, within, across and beyond the frontier.

The fifth century witnessed the final dissolution of the Western Empire, and its replacement in Gaul by Frankish kingdoms which placed self-consciously non-Roman military elites at the apex of the political and economic order. This section will consider the process by which this change came about, as the Western Empire was supplanted in Gaul, and the Frankish kingdoms grew in its

259 Ekhardt, K. A. (ed.), *Pactus Legis Salicae. MGH, Legum Sectio I* (Hanover 1962). Translated by Drew (1991), p. 104-5

260 For instance, by Delbruck, H. (trans. W. J. Renfroe) *History of the Art of War, volume II: The barbarian invasions*, (Lincoln 1990 [1920])

place. This analysis will reflect on debates raised in recent historiography on the degree of violence, upheaval, consent and assimilation involved in this process, principally from three thematically contiguous and chronologically overlapping perspectives. First, the end of the Western Roman army and questions of militarization and changing attitudes to violence in the late empire, c. 375-475. Second, the degree of material, political and cultural continuity versus disruption and upheaval between the late Roman Empire and the Frankish successor kingdoms, c. 405-486. And third, the character of the Frankish kingdoms as they emerged at the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries relative to the former empire and their fellow successor states, c. 455-511.

It is important to emphasise, at the outset, the incompleteness and ambiguity of the evidence for the fifth century in particular. Narrative accounts of the period are late, Christianizing, and/or perfunctory, offering nothing like the detail and expertise provided by Ammianus for the fourth century. Military conflicts are often dismissed in a few words, or merely alluded to indirectly, leaving plenty of room for interpretation as to their severity, the territorial extent of their impact, or the number of participants.[261] The archaeological remains of the period are similarly partial and ambiguous compared with earlier and later phases, although a number of significant finds and their analysis in the later twentieth century has served to remedy this imbalance somewhat.[262]

These limitations further complicate the already difficult business of attempting to reconcile sometimes contradictory literary sources with the material remains of the period. Given these difficulties, the conclusions of this analysis are necessarily tentative. Nonetheless it will be argued that the evidence implies that the transformation of the former empire in Gaul was accompanied by considerable institutional discontinuity, as well as violence and social

261 Detailed contemporary narrative of non-fragmentary nature ends with Ammianus and Zosimus, the *Notitia Dignitatum* only covers the army up to perhaps 420, and few novels are added to the Theodosian Code in the fifth century West. For a summary of the written sources see Jones, A. H. M. *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, (Oxford 1964), p. 115-6

262 See Dierkens, A. and Perin, P. “The fifth-century advance of the Franks in Belgica II: history and archaeology”, in E. Taayke and J. H. Looijenga et al (eds.), *Essays on the Early Franks* (Eelde 2003), p. 173-5 for a list of efforts to make the period less archaeologically enigmatic, and remaining problems.

upheaval. And that the Frankish takeover may have benefited from cooperation with the conquered military subcultures, facilitated by and facilitating a considerable degree of cultural accommodation and assimilation.

3.1 – The End of the Western Roman army, c. 375-475

As the previous chapter showed, Roman armies were substantially functional and effective in the late fourth century. They may well have contained a large proportion of self-consciously barbarian troops, but not necessarily to a substantially greater degree than the fifty percent recorded for the early empire. As we have seen, they also included a further class of provincial auxiliary units which were similar in character to barbarian troops, and whose discipline and obedience in the field was open to question.[263] But there is little evidence that the increasing emphasis on ethnic-type elements in the Gallic armies, and indeed throughout the empire in the late fourth century, resulted in particular problems of loyalty or effectiveness for the Roman military. It may indeed have made the imperial armies more flexible and better adapted to the vicissitudes of frontier warfare. Above all, Roman forces remained distinct from Frankish ones in one key respect: they still drew upon regular systems of supply, pay and discipline underpinned by the bureaucracy and infrastructure of the empire. These systems allowed larger forces to be kept in the field for longer, and made them better organized than their barbarian opponents. But most importantly they formed an iron chain by which the culturally diverse units of Gaul were joined to the imperial court.

The sources for the history of the Roman armed forces deteriorate badly for the fifth century,[264] leading to widely divergent views on its fate. But the *Notitia Dignitatum* indicates that the structure of the Western Roman military was substantially altered between the late-fourth and the mid-fifth century, partly as a result of losses amounting to perhaps half of all its combat units.[265] By the 420s,

263 See previous chapter, p. 69-72

264 Wightman, E. M. *Gallia Belgica*, (London 1985), p. 300-301; Jones (1964), p. 170-171

265 The *distributio numerorum*, the latest part of the *Notitia*, shows numerous units being promoted to the status of *palatinae*, *comitatenses*, and *pseudo-comitatenses* from less senior status, apparently to replace recently destroyed or disbanded units – see Jones (1964),

the Western Empire was apparently relying on federate allies to sustain its military efforts against the interlopers of the 406 Rhine crossing; when those allies abandoned the army of Castinus in Spain, it was catastrophically defeated.[266] Mauritania and Africa Proconsularis were so poorly endowed with soldiers, and the empire so unable to move its armies quickly and effectively between regions, that the introduction of ten thousand Vandal warriors entirely transformed the fortunes of the region, despite its evident centrality to the imperial fisc.[267] Aetius, the most successful Roman *magister militum* of the early-mid fifth century, relied on a group of Hunnic allies both to achieve victory against the barbarians, and to secure his position within the empire in the face of imperial hostility. When it became necessary to defend the west from Attila, Aetius was forced to assemble a coalition in which barbarians were recognised as junior partners rather than clear subordinates.[268] By the 460s the parts of Gaul still not directly controlled by barbarian elites were effectively independent, and the empire was reduced to playing the new de-facto rulers of the West off against one-another.[269] The overall impression is that the effectiveness of the Western armies declined precipitously in this period.[270]

The basic reason for this decline is relatively straightforward. The western empire was, in the course of the fifth century, catastrophically impoverished by the loss of revenue-producing territories in Western Europe, Africa and the Mediterranean, and ultimately became unable to afford to offer the steady stream of pay and supplies that had been so central to the loyalty and effectiveness of its vast armies.[271] The underlying reasons for this fiscal collapse are, however, much less clear and cannot be taken for granted. The battles of Adrianople and Frigidus, and the civil wars of the early fifth century, are offered as key

Appendix II, p. 351-358

266 Hydatius 68-69 (422); Liebeschuetz, W. “The end of the Roman army”, in Rich (ed.), *War and Society in the Roman World* (1993), p. 266

267 Procopius, *Wars* III.3-4; Hydatius, 80, 107

268 Priscus, *Fragments*, 64

269 Heather, P. *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A new history of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford 2006), p. 394

270 Prominent dissenters from this point include Bachrach and (to a lesser extent) Walter Goffart and Micheal Kulikowski. See below.

271 Jones (1964), p. 612, highlights a passage in Eugippius’s *Life of Severinus* (XX), which neatly places the end of regular pay for troops guarding the upper Rhine around the late-460s or 370s.

watersheds in military decline, due to the damage that they did to Roman forces and the veterans in particular.[272] To this, if the fragmentary but credible Sulpicius Alexander is to be believed, we may add a serious defeat in Frankish territory of the imperial armies stationed at Trier in the late-380s, in which many of the officers were killed.[273] However, it is difficult to determine whether these reverses were any worse than those of the late-third, or indeed the late-second, century. The impact of Adrianople was felt predominantly by the Eastern army, while the damage done in terms of casualties at Frigidus is not as clearly attested and may not have been especially profound, given that the battle was swung by the defection of western Roman troops and the only numerically recorded casualties were the deaths of 20,000 gothic federates.[274] Likewise the degree of attrition entailed in the early-fifth century wars and invasions cannot be ascertained. The Roman army had suffered massive losses in previous civil wars, not demonstrably less severe, but had always regained control in the past.[275] Nonetheless, the evidence of the *distibutio numerorum* – that the army lost over fifty percent of its fourth-century combat units by 420 AD – and the evident subsequent inability of the Western empire to defend or retake precious territory in Spain and Africa, cannot be ignored.[276]

The notion that the Roman armies could be permanently damaged by the loss of experienced officers and the temporary failure of organizational systems is supported by the apparent lack of a written tradition of military organization and discipline. It is an extraordinary fact that, though some legislation was laid down for the armed forces, so literate and centralized a society as that of the Roman empire apparently made no attempt to fully codify and regulate its regimes of military training and discipline, as it did in the case of the civil laws. Vegetius

272 Tomlin, R. "A.H.M. Jones and the Army of the Fourth Century" in D. Gwynn (ed.) *A.H.M. Jones and the Later Roman Empire* (Leiden 2008), p. 159; Southern, P. & Dixon, K. R., *The Late Roman Army* (New Haven 1996), p. 38-40

273 "Perturbatis ergo ordinibus, caesae legionis. Heraclio Iovinianorum tribuno ac paene omnibus qui militibus praeerant extinctis, paucis effugium totum nox et latibula silvarum praestiterunt." – Sulpicius Alexander, III, in Gregory of Tours, *Histories* II.9

274 Campbell, D. "Review article: The later Roman Army", in *Britannia* 30 (1999), p. 391-4, dissenting from Southern & Dixon 1996. Zosimus, IV; Orosius, *Historiae adversum paganos*, VII

275 Christie, N. "Wars within the frontiers: Archaeologies of rebellion, revolt and civil war", in War and Warfare in Late Antiquity (2013), p. 952

276 Heather, P. *Empires and Barbarians* (Oxford 2009), p. 175

provides some signs of a now largely lost tradition of military writing, but he equally makes clear that it was not widely known or influential.[277] Thus it is possible that profound inter-generational changes in the organizational and disciplinary structure of the Roman hosts might have come about without being fully appreciated by contemporaries.

The Theodosian Code implies that the problems of the Roman armies were associated with difficulties in securing and retaining willing recruits to replenish the depleted ranks: As we have seen, 367 witnessed legislation aimed at preventing self-mutilation to avoid conscription, and in the same year the height requirement for potential recruits was reduced.[278] A rash of measures set out to prevent desertion between 379 and 383, although a law of 380 restated the long-standing ban on slaves being used as military recruits, implying that difficulties in recruitment were still limited. In 394 a measure permitting the enrolment of *infantes vel pueri* indicates further problems, and a second group of measures against deserters followed in 403-406 was this time accompanied by the reversal of the ancient prohibition of slave-soldiers…

> "In the matter of defence against hostile attacks, We order that consideration be given not only to the legal status of soldiers, but also to their physical strength [*vires*]. Although we believe that freeborn persons are aroused by love of country, we exhort slaves also, by the authority of this edict, that as soon as possible they shall offer themselves for the labours of war, and if they receive their arms as men fit for military service, they shall obtain the reward of freedom, and they shall also receive two solidi each for travel money. Especially, of course, do we urge this service upon the slaves of those persons who are retained in the armed imperial service, and likewise upon the slaves of *foederati* and of *dediticii*, since it is evident that they are making war also along with their masters."[279]

277 Vegetius, *Epitoma* I.1
278 *Cod.Theo.* VII.8.3
279 *Cod.Theo.* VII.1.14; VII.13.16

We cannot know whether this measure was the culmination of growing pressure or an emergency measure aimed at the specific exigencies of the Gothic attacks on Italy,[280] but whatever the case, its final clause illustrates that the admission of slaves into the imperial armies was not a total volt-face. Clearly at least some slaves (and presumably half-free men) were already accompanying their masters into battle. And several other laws imply a subtle shift in the recruitment and discipline of the Roman armies, from a system emphasising regular conscription to a greater emphasis on recruitment pools based on hereditary and local military subcultures[281].

Further evidence for this shift comes from the regulations regarding absence from the Roman armies. Measures enacted under Constantine dictated that tribunes who allowed their troops to temporarily absent themselves from the army were to be punished with dispossession and deportation in peacetime, death in wartime. In the middle of the fourth century, however, the penalty was radically reduced, to a hefty fine. A further law of 413 did not even hold tribunes responsible for the departure of their soldiers, instead threatening the soldiers themselves with demotion.[282] Several laws of the 360s to 390s insisted that the sons of veterans enrol in the military, reinforcing an existing trend; the last of these forbade the sons of veterans from assuming non-military government roles.[283] And a measure of 372 declared the end of payments of *annonae* for the upkeep and equipment for the military reserves (*accrescentes*); from now on, they were to be maintained by their *parentes*.[284]

We have already seen how barbarians were penetrating the ranks of the regular army; how, in addition to the barbarian and *foederati* and semi-barbarian *laeti*, citizens of the empire were enrolling as auxiliary units with strong regional

280 It cannot have been a response to the Rhine crossing, which it predated by some months.

281 James, E. “The militarization of Roman society, 400-700”, in A. N. Jorgensen & B. L. Clausen (eds.), *Military aspects of Scandinavian society in a European perspective AD 1-1300*, (Kopenhagen 1997), p. 20

282 *Cod.Theo*. VII.12.1; VII.1.2; VII.18.16

283 *Cod.Theo* VII.1.5; VII.1.8; VII.22.12.

284 *Cod.Theo*. VII.1.11 - “Ii, qui inter adcrescentes matriculis adtinentur, tamdiu alimoniam a parentibus sumant, quoad gerendis armis idonei fuerint aestimati, ita ut cesset super eorum nomine praebitio fiscalis annonae.” For further measures which tacitly acknowledged the attachment of soldiers to wider familial groups who provided their batmen, see Barlow J. “Kinship, Identity and Fourth-century Franks”, in *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte*, 45.2 (1996), p. 234

characteristics; and how independent armed groups were operating in northern Gaul. These trends ran in parallel to changes in Roman law that apparently tended to accept a greater degree of independence among the soldiers, and encouraged them to draw on their families and communities for their military preparation. But such social traditions of military participation were heavily concentrated in the frontier regions, and the result seems to have been an increasing reliance by the armed forces on the Gallic and barbarian levies. The *Notitia Dignitatum* shows that units of Cornuti, Celtae, Petulantes, and Batavi had been integrated into the Italian and Eastern armies sometime between the late fourth and early fifth centuries.[285] The recruiting pools of northern Gaul were thus exploited to restore the ranks of the wealthier and more populous parts of the empire.[286]

Wolf Liebeschuetz has persuasively suggested that the late empire saw a de-militarization of the Roman citizenry, especially the aristocracy who had historically formed the officer class.[287] The psychological perspective, which sees violent experiences as a key factor in the mental and physiological formation of willing military recruits, adds considerable weight to his theory. The changes in equipment of the late Roman period, which favoured looser formations on the battlefield, added to the psychological problem of recruitment by removing the ability of the impenetrable formation to subsume the psychological frailty of the inexperienced individuals within the ranks.[288] Under these conditions, the imperial core was still capable of producing some enthusiastic soldiers, but the relative peace that it had enjoyed in the fourth century, and the more effective prohibition of weapon-bearing outside of official military roles, meant that they were both fewer and less conveniently concentrated than they were closer to the frontiers.

---

285 Southern & Dixon (1996), p. 48-57; *ND* VII.

286 Orosius, *Histories*, VII.42; Heather, P. “Imperial centre and Northwest frontier, A. D. 300-476”, (forthcoming) p. 19-20, who points to the formation of the Italian field army in the early fifth century as a strong candidate for the moment when several Gallic units were transferred into Italy.

287 Liebeschuetz, W. “Citizen status and law in the Roman empire and the Visigothic kingdom”, from Pohl and Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction: the construction of ethnic communities, 300-800* (Leiden 1998)

288 See Chapter 2, note 174

At the level of the Christianizing Roman elite of the later-fourth and fifth centuries, there are some signs of sense of estrangement from the armies that dominated the frontiers. Themistius' Oration for Valentinian revealed a constituency of opinion among the senatorial elites that chafed at the financial demands of the military, and even called into question the utility of their efforts to the empire as a whole.[289] Aurelius Victor made no attempt to hide his resentment of the political dominance of the military over the imperial office, and occasionally disdained the soldiery as rash and ignorant.[290] And although Augustine clearly approved of properly justified and mandated warfare, his writings occasionally display a sense of discomfort with personal violence and its executors, even when their actions are legitimate and authorised -

> "…a judge [*iudex*] considers it unworthy and heinous to kill with his own hands someone who has been sentenced to death; at his command, though, an executioner [*carnifex*] does it who by reason of his temperament has been appointed for the task of killing, in conformity with the law, a person who has been sentenced to death; but he could as well, because of his cruelty, kill an innocent person… Hence it is also that we use irrational beings for those things that it would be heinous for human beings to carry out. For, to be sure, it is right for a thief to be badly bitten, yet a person does not do this by himself, nor is it done by a son or by a member of his household or even by his slave but by his dog, which is fitting for this animal to do because of its nature."[291]

289 "Booty and prisoners profit only those who bear arms… The point is not to recover Mesopotamia or to bring back to reason the Scythians beyond or to rebuild the cities ruined by the Germans; even if we succeeded in doing so, the only ones to notice would be the Syrians, Thracians, and Gauls" - Themistius, *Orations* VIII.170-4 translated in Goffart, W. "Rome, Constantinople and the Barbarians", in *AHR* vol.86 no.2 (Apr. 1981), 275-306, p. 290. For further discussion of the specific contextual demands that framed Themistius' oration, see Heather, P. & Matthews, J. *The Goths in the Fourth Century* (Liverpool 2010), p. 11-21

290 Aurelius Victor, *De caesaribus*, XI ("milites...more suo seditiosius"), XXXIV ("milites, quos fere contra ingenium perditae res subigunt recta consulere"), XXXVII (""Verum dum [senatores] oblectantur otio simulque divitiis pavent, quarum usum affluentiamque aeternitate maius putant, munivere *militaribus et paene barbaris* viam in se ac posteros dominandi.")

To a certain extent, Augustine's reflection was neither novel nor particularly Christian. Ostentatious displays of personal clemency by Roman generals, displaying an empathy for the condemned enemy that distinguished them from the rank-and-file, were older than the empire itself, and Ammianus had recorded that the proudly un-Christian emperor Julian had made one such gesture when a convicted rapist was brought before him in Gaul, against the wishes of his troops.[292] What was new was the extent to which Augustine demeaned the executors of admittedly desirable violence, describing them as brute animals that would as readily kill the innocent as the guilty, and rhetorically eliding them with the barbarian 'other'.

It should be noted that there is a certain psychological credibility to this pessimistic perspective: as the first chapter illustrated, once a person is in the habit of violence, there can be no guarantee that this learned behaviour will not be expressed in morally or legally inappropriate contexts.[293] While Polybius had admitted that men could become inveterately violent, becoming like animals, as a result the of psychological conditioning, he had been careful to reserve such condemnations for the enemies of Rome.[294] But Augustine goes further, in that he

291 Augustine (trans. Ramsey, B.), *Responses to Miscellaneous Questions*, (New City Press 2008), LIII (p. 58). Augustine subsequently expressed a more sanguine view on the business of killing, but never fully reconciled himself to it, given his psychologically naive insistence that all violence must be done out of the love of God. See Clark, J. "Desires of the Hangman: Augustine on Legitimized Violence", in Drake, H. A. *Violence in Late Antiquity*, (Aldershot 2006), p. 140-145. Further possible evidence for this trend appears in the letters of Avitus of Vienne, (Ep. 95) (p. 322), who refers to a young man called Ceratius thus - "...He inherits from the wisdom of his mother the fact that he willingly flees barbarians, and from the courage of his father that he does not turn his back on literature". The editor suggests a possible stinging rebuke, based on satire or irony, in this, but the first part is thought to be earnestly stated - Avitus of Vienne (trans. Shanzer, D. & Wood, I.), *Letters and Selected Prose* (Cambridge 2002), p. 322

292 Ammianus XVI.5.12.

293 See Chapter 1, p. 33-4

294 Polybius' psychologically insightful reflection on the potential alterations of character and behaviour associated with exposure to violence, which draws a medical analogy, deserves to be quoted in full -

"…not only do men's bodies and certain of the ulcers and tumours afflicting them become so to speak savage and brutalized and quite incurable, but that this is true in a much higher degree of their souls. In the case of ulcers, if we treat them, they are sometimes inflamed by the treatment itself and spread more rapidly, while again if we neglect them they continue, in virtue of their own nature, to eat into the flesh and never rest until they have utterly destroyed the tissues beneath. Similarly such malignant lividities and putrid ulcers often grow in the human soul, that no beast becomes at the end more wicked or cruel than man. In the case of men in such a state, if we treat the disease by pardon and kindness, they think we are scheming to betray them or deceive them, and become more mistrustful and hostile

also ‘others’ the violent men on whose necessity he insists, adding a kind of caste gloss to the invective by placing them below slaves in a sketched moral hierarchy. And he shows a revulsion at the prospect of ‘getting your hands dirty’, as a soldier might have it, which would not readily reconcile itself to the practice, as opposed to the principle, of military service. Given what we have seen of the importance of cultural attitudes in shaping developmental reactions to the experience of violence, such reservations must have contributed to the growing tendency of landlords in Italy to withhold their peasants from conscription by subterfuge.[295]

This sharper sense of opposition between senatorial elites of the imperial core and the dirty work of military service coincided with a separation of Western emperors from active military commands and the migration of the imperial court toward Italy.[296] This development put a series of generalissimos in charge of the Western empire by virtue of their power over its armies, whose political careers hinged on their personal relationship to those armies, and whose personal reputations seemed self-consciously designed to identify them with the rank-and-file. The Frank, Arbogast, ostentatiously rejected the power of Roman literate culture over the military when he publicly destroyed the imperial rescript that was meant to depose him, and was rumoured to have personally assassinated the emperor thereafter.[297] But his removal, and the general backlash against barbarians holding the highest commands, did not put an end to the trend. The *magister militum* Boniface appropriated an army meant for war in Spain to

---

to their would-be benefactors, but if, on the contrary, we attempt to cure the evil by retaliation they work up their passions to outrival ours, until there is nothing so abominable or so atrocious that they will not consent to do it, imagining all the while that they are displaying a fine courage. Thus at the end they are utterly brutalized and no longer can be called human beings. Of such a condition the origin and most potent cause lies in bad manners and customs and wrong training from childhood, but there are several contributory ones, the chief of which is habitual violence and unscrupulousness on the part of those in authority over them." *The Histories*, Book 1, 81

295 Southern & Dixon (1996), p. 53

296 The Praetorian Prefecture of Gaul was also relocated to Arles in the 390s – Heather, “Northwest”, p. 18-19

297 Zosimus, IV.53-54, who also claims that “the soldiers submitted to this audacious action, not only because he was so brave and warlike a person, but because they were attached to him through his contempt of riches.” Some centuries later, the ritual violent destruction of illegitimate documents appears as an ordinary feature of Frankish jurisprudence – Nelson, J. “Dispute Settlement in Carolingian West Francia”, in J. Nelson, *The Frankish World* (London 1996), p. 65

establish his own power in Africa. His personal behaviour stands in very striking contrast to Augustine's concept of proper conduct in office, and to the example of Julian half a century earlier: according to the admiring report of Olympiodorus, upon hearing a plea that a barbarian federate had taken the wife of a local farmer, Boniface found the barbarian and decapitated him personally in the dead of night, gleefully presenting the severed head to the offended farmer the next day.[298] His subsequent death from wounds sustained during a battle in which his army was victorious suggests that Boniface was putting himself close to the action on the battlefield. Aetius, (though less self-consciously 'barbarian' in his public conduct) like Arbogast, attempted to use the army to install his choice of emperor, relying on them subsequently to protect his position, and also enjoyed a reputation for military lifestyle.[299]

Between Augustine on the one hand, and the likes of Arbogast and Bonifacius on the other, what emerges is an apparent bifurcation in elite values that contrasts with the Old Roman *cursus honorem*, which aimed at seamlessly combining civil and military careers.[300] The late Roman empire was an era of lifelong soldiers and lifelong civilians, with most of the former being concentrated near to the frontiers, and most of the latter dwelling in the interior, and this contrast was resulting in two parallel and antagonistic cultural trends. In civil society – particularly in the core provinces – admiration of the military had come to become tinged with suspicion and disdain for soldiers,[301] who were sometimes thought of as a less Roman or un-Roman 'other', doing the necessary but unpleasant work entailed in maintaining the empire. It must be stressed that this contrast was far from absolute. The more Romanized communities of the interior continued to produce some military recruits. But in the frontier provinces – and,

298 Olympiodorus, *Fragments*, in R. C. Blockley (ed. and trans.), *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus* (Liverpool: 1981)

299 Flavius Merobaudes, Panegyric I - "...your breastplate is not so much a defense as a garment… not a magnificent display but a way of life; finally… what is readiness for battle to others is routine for you." (translation from Clover, F. L. "Flavius Merobaudes: A translation and historical commentary", in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 61:1 (1971), p. 1-78

300 Liebeschuetz, W. "The end of the Roman army in the Western empire", from Rich and Shipley (eds.), *War and Society in the Roman World*, (London 1993), p. 274

301 Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire* (London 1993), p. 146-7; Lee, A. D. *War in Late Antiquity: A Social History* (Oxford 2009), p. 153-170

increasingly as the fifth century wore on, in the imperial heartlands – military subcultures were becoming established in which the military and their characteristic violence were dominant forces in society. In the midst of these dominant violent subcultures, leaders made efforts to identify themselves with the de-facto military elites, who had become inured to being ruled by their own.

It is perhaps in this context that we should view the somewhat hysterical claims of Salvian, that Roman citizens were joining the barbarians *en masse* due to the tyranny of the empire –

> "So you find men passing over everywhere, now to the Goths, now to the *Bacaudae*, or whatever other barbarians have established their power anywhere… Hence the name of Roman citizen, once not only much valued but dearly bought, is now voluntarily repudiated and shunned, and is thought not merely valueless, but even almost abhorrent… even those who do not take refuge with the barbarians are yet compelled to be barbarians themselves; for this is the case with the greater part of the Spaniards, no small proportion of the Gauls, and, in fine, all those throughout the Roman world whose Roman citizenship has been brought to nothing by Roman extortion."[302]

These claims are presented in support of a broader moral argument, and doubtless should be taken with a grain of salt, but they nonetheless imply that some of the free natives of the empire were preferring 'barbarian' identity which, interestingly, did *not* necessarily entail joining one of the outside groups that had established themselves in the empire. If the deduction of M. Charles that Vegetius' *De Re Militari* dates not from the late fourth century, but to the 430's or 440's, is correct, then his claim – that Romans were enrolling in the Roman armies as Auxiliaries rather than under ordinary terms – dovetails with Salvian's allusion.[303] The overall impression is of an unknown proportion of men suitable to military service in the ordinary ranks of the Roman army joining themselves

302 Salvian, *De Gubernatione Dei*, V.5
303 Charles, M. *Vegetius in Context: Establishing the date of the Epitoma rei Militaris* (Stuttgart 2007), p. 16-22

to groups who took a greater sub-cultural pride in their military work, and could resist the demands of the Roman state and collectively negotiate with it.[304]

3.2 – Discontinuity and Violence in fifth-century Northern Gaul, c.405-486

The collapse of imperial military dominance in the West provides the context for the momentous political, social and economic changes which transformed the region between the Rhine and the Loire – the area which would later form the seat of Frankish royal power – in the fifth century. But the nature of these changes remains the subject of vigorous debate. At one pole of this controversy are those who see the Frankish kings as provincial governors acting with the consent of the empire, their armies as highly confined elite groups, billeted on the rural population in an orderly fashion that only marginally disrupted the socio-economic status quo.[305] At the other pole are those who see the period as one particularly troubled by warfare, involving widespread economic and social upheaval as the Frankish kings aggressively asserted their power over pre-existing elites and the character of local society was profoundly transformed.[306] This section will assess these changes through the literary and material evidence, and weigh the arguments for continuity and disruption, consent and violence, in

304 Drinkwater & Elton offer a different explanation of Salvian's claims, based on the premise that Roman were preferring "less complicated economic life under peaceful barbarian rule." But this does not reconcile to Salvian's clear statement that some Romans were separating themselves from Roman identity *without* accepting the overlordship of incoming barbarian rulers. Drinkwater, J. & Elton, H. *Fifth-Century Gaul: A crisis of identity?* (Cambridge 2002), p. 130

305 For instance, Kulikowski, M. "The archaeology of war and the 5th century invasions", in A. Serantis and N. Christie (eds.), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 2013); Goffart, W. *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon*, (Princeton 1988); Bachrach, B. S. *Merovingian Military Organization* (University of Minnesota, 1972)

306 For instance, Heather, P. *Empires and Barbarians: The Fall of Rome and the Birth of Europe,* (Oxford 2009), Liebeschuetz, W. "Citizen status and law in the Roman empire and the Visigothic kingdom", from W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction: the construction of ethnic communities, 300-800* (Leiden 1998); Ward-Perkins, B. *The Fall of Rome: And the End of Civilization* (Oxford 2005); Whitby, "Armies and society", in Cameron, A., Ward-Perkins, B. & Whitby, M. (eds.) *The Cambridge ancient history volume 14: Late Antiquity: Empire and successors, AD 425-600* (Cambridge 2001), p. 481. Halsall stands somewhere between these positions, arguing that barbarian takeover was a bi-product of imperial collapse - "The Barbarian Invasions", in Fouracre (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge 2007), p. 55; see also, Christie, N. "Wars within the frontiers: Archaeologies of rebellion, revolt and civil war", in A. Sarantis and N. Christie (eds.), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 2013) p. 961-3

the period. It will conclude that there is a strong case for seeing the period as one of socio-economic disruption, collapse and transformation, out of which a society emerged that was less literate, less comfortable, and more violence-oriented at its elite levels.

3.2.1 – Literary Evidence

From the fragmentary notices provided by the literary evidence, it is quite clear that fifth-century northern Gaul and the Rhine region played host to a fractured political scene, and a significant number of military conflicts. The Rhine Crossing of 405-6, which occasioned a major battle between the Franks and a coalition of Vandals and Alans, was rapidly followed by the invasion of Constantine III, who abortively employed armies from the region in his attempt to seize the western empire.[307] While the broader civil wars were settled by the 420s, The Rhine Franks were again active by the end of the decade, causing Aetius to campaign on the Rhine in 428 and/or 432.[308] The attacks of another Frankish group – possibly the Salians – in northern Gaul led to the conquest of Cambrai and Arras in the 430s, requiring an imperial counter-attack that drove them back to Tournai in the 440s.[309] The region was further exposed to military depredations with the invasion of the Huns in the early 450s, the probable occasion of a Hunnic intervention in Frankish politics in their own territories.[310] The subsequent political scene was complicated by the separation of the 'Roman' enclave of Aegidius from central imperial control after the death of Majorian, and subsequent conflicts saw territories between the Somme and the Seine change hands, possibly more than once, over a thirty year period, with the politics of the region only stabilized by the triumph of Clovis over Gallic and Frankish rivals in the 490s.

The last phase of this narrative – the part comprising the Frankish takeover of Belgica Secunda – is the most controversial due to the late and confused

307 Hydatius (406-411); Zosimus V-VI
308 *Gallic Chronicle of 452*
309 *Histories* II.9; Dirkens and Perin (2003), p. 165-170
310 Thompson, E. A. *The Huns* (Oxford 1996), p. 137-149, principally citing Priscus, *Fragments*

narrative in Gregory of Tours' *Histories* that provides the most extensive description. Where some historians see an often bitter territorial war culminating in Frankish conquest of the region, others see a broadly consensual and ordered process occasionally punctuated by political antagonisms and battles. Michael Kulikowski's statement that "many of the barbarians in the 5th century West, whom we are conditioned to think of as invaders, were in fact first-, second- and third-generation inhabitants of the imperial provinces"[311] may be seen as particularly resonant in relation to the Franks, who, unlike the Vandals and Goths who took over the southern provinces, had long been in intimate cultural and political contact with the regions that they came to rule. A famous letter from Bishop Remigius of Reims welcomed Clovis as the legitimate governor of Belgica, and Remigius later baptized him and many other elite Franks, leading some historians to conclude that the Frankish king remained a servant of the admittedly defunct western Empire, ruling along essentially Roman or "sub-Roman" lines.[312] The narrative evidence of Frankish conflict with imperial forces, and the Life of Saint Genovefa, which states that Clovis was "king by right of war", contradict this rosy impression,[313] but none of the sources is sufficiently detailed and reliable to settle the issue once and for all.

Reading back from legal evidence of the Carolingian period, Walter Goffart has extended the picture of consensual and ordered takeover considerably with his theory that the incoming Frankish warriors were settled in the empire on strictly designated lands that would be exempt from taxation on the basis of military service.[314] Goffart states that the "belief in an extension of Roman administrative structures is unappealing to those who wish Rome to really fall... Either inclination, for survival or against, needs a basis in evidence."[315] But this is to ask the impossible of those arguing for a collapse in administrative culture, which process would, by its very nature, result in a dearth of documentary

311 Kulikowski (2013), p. 685

312 MGH III Epistolae Austrasicae 2, p. 113; Bachrach (1973), p. 7-8, 17

313 MacGeorge, P. *Late Roman Warlords*, (Oxford 2002), p. 128, citing *Vita Genovafae* (ed. Krusch.), ch. 56. The *Vita* (ch. 35) also reports a lengthy Frankish siege of Paris sometime in the late-5th century. See also Gregory of Tours' *Glory of the Martyrs* (LIX), in which Clovis abortively besieges Nantes.

314 Primarily from Capitulary evidence - Goffart, W. "Frankish military duty and the fate of Roman taxation", in *Early Medieval Europe* 16:2 (May 2008), p. 166-190

315 Ibid.

evidence. Goffart also draws a false dichotomy between a bureaucratically organized land-based levy system and a so-called "Tacitean" mode of service based on the abstract principle of loyalty to the warlord to the death.[316] As the first chapter illustrated, the promotion and organization of violence never takes place under such simplistic conditions, but instead constitutes a variable blend of psychological conditioning, social expectation, fear of punishment and the promise of reward. If we accept that such complex causes of military participation – which were not imitations of Roman types and did not rely on documentary records, but are not simply based on abstract notions of loyalty – can and did exist, the argument for a regular military administration as the only alternative loses its force.

The continuity theory is also weakened by what we know of the survival, or otherwise, of the *civitas* structure that had formed the basis for taxation and military levies, as well as religious organization, in the late empire. By the sixth century, while this structure was largely preserved (in some form) south of the Loire, in northern Gaul it was apparently radically disrupted, with literary sources indicating that levies were now organized on a more irregular basis focused on a new class of *duces*. Only Trier and a few other major *civitates* stand out as exceptions to a general decline in the Roman system between the Rhine and the Loire, and even south of this line, the survival was not complete.[317] Therefore it is more apt to see the Frankish kings as presiding over a patchwork of territories with various degrees of bureaucratic competence, and the vestiges of Roman institutional culture, rather than taking over a smoothly operating and universal system as the Ostrogoths did in Italy or the Normans would later do in Anglo-Saxon England.[318]

The most fundamental assumption made by Goffart about the Frankish takeover, which appeals even to some of his opponents, is that neither Franks nor native landowners would want to make the process of settlement any more

316 Goffart (2008), p. 178

317 Heather (2009), p. 312; Macgeorge (2002), p. 125. See Bachrach (1973), p. 65-73 for a full list, derived from Gregory of Tours, of towns which continued to serve as centres of taxation and military organization.

318 For further discussion of this question, which arrives at similar conclusions, see Macgeorge (2002), p. 125-128

difficult or violent than they had to.[319] For him, "their goals tended to be the same as those which the imperial government had already shown itself willing to grant, namely, an advantageous place within an undamaged Roman society".[320] From this extends the argument from silence as to the probable degree of accommodation between incoming Franks and Roman landowners, and its analogue of assumed administrative continuity, confirmed and extended, in Goffart's view, by the Carolingian evidence.[321] From the perspective of behavioural psychology such an assumption appears simplistic and reductive – it is a variant of the economic self-interest conceptions of human motivation criticised in the opening chapter.[322] As that discussion showed, individuals and groups only consistently avoid violence for the sake of economic self-interest in theoretical models, which are wildly disrupted by non-rational behavioural and psychological inclinations, in particular those developed through experiences of violence under conducive cultural conditions. The incoming Frankish elites in northern Gaul and the Rhine region were culturally militarized groups who had been frequently exposed to violence in myriad forms, and as such form particularly poor candidates for the kinds of rational self-interest model assumed by Goffart.

On the contrary, from the perspective of behavioural conditioning and developmental psychology, it is more likely that the process of Frankish takeover (under legally ambivalent conditions) would have been characterized by numerous acts of violence and aggression against their new, often vulnerable hosts.[323] The invading Frankish armies did not benefit from the elaborate systems of supply enjoyed by the Roman armies of the late fourth century, whose

319 Liebeschuetz, W. "Cities, taxes and the accommodation of the barbarians: the theories of Durliat and Goffart", from Pohl (ed.), *Kingdoms of the empire: the integration of the barbarians in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 1997), p. 135-6

320 Goffart, W. *Rome's Fall and After* (London 1989), p. 129-130

321 Liebeschuetz (1997), p. 141-142

322 See Chapter 1, p. 27-31

323 Again, the Normans in England make an interesting point of comparison. In this better-documented process, even a relatively orderly transition that saw the machinery of government pass quite smoothly under the power of the incoming Norman kings was the occasion of considerable violent conflict according the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, an image confirmed by the widespread loss of ploughs attested in the Domesday Book on lands taken over by new Norman lords – Morris, J. (ed.), *Domesday Book: Cambridgeshire* (Chichester 1983)

volatility and excesses we have already witnessed. The patchy, but still more numerous and detailed, narrative sources for fourth century Gaul allude to frequent small- and medium-scale raiding warfare that innately tended to slip under the notice of the politically and ecclesiastically-oriented fifth-century historians and chroniclers.[324] Nothing about the politically fractured scene of the later fifth century indicates that the cultural and political conditions that permitted and encouraged this activity had diminished. If anything, the situation was more chaotic, providing more opportunities and incentives for raiding. The imperial city of Trier, which had already come under attack twice in the late fourth century, was assaulted by the Franks five more times between 405 and 455.[325] If there were forces large enough to take on this ambitious target throughout the period, what we have seen of Frankish political organization so far implies that smaller parties were raiding more humble and less well-documented settlements much more frequently. Thus, predatory raiding of these regions was already a sub-cultural tradition among many of the new settlers, and the fact that they now intended to remain rather than carry their loot away would not in itself have brought about any profound change of psychological profile from the ones which had pertained to the Frankish warriors hitherto.

3.2.2 – Archaeological Evidence

While the literary evidence offers a number of ambiguities with respect to continuity and violence which permit a wide range of interpretations, the archaeological evidence – much less frequently cited by the advocates of the continuity thesis – presents a multi-faceted picture of socio-economic change marked by clear signs of discontinuity, decline, and militarization. Recessionary trends in Gaul and Belgica which had been halted (but not fully reversed) in the late empire were resumed in this period. However, the processes attested in the archaeological record do not, in many cases, map neatly onto the reports of the narrative record, and there was considerable variation between regions.

---

324 *Histories* II.9-10; See Chapter 2

325 Salvian, *De Gubanatore*, VI; Dierkens & Perin (2003), p. 169 (n. 21)

The numismatic evidence indicates that the fifth century witnessed a drastic decline in both the quantity and quality of coin production in northern Gaul. The mints of Britain had already closed down in the late fourth century, and in the early fifth century the northern recession in coin production was extended and compounded by the closing of the mints at Trier and (somewhat later) Arles.[326] These events presaged a currency squeeze that by the end of the century severely restricted the numbers of silver and bronze coins in particular. The quality of coin production was apparently no longer subject to much regulation, and increasingly inept forgeries of imperial coinage became widespread; similar but less dramatic effects may be observed further south.[327] In terms of availability of small denominations, there is a marked contrast between northern Gaul and Aquitaine, where bronze coins continued to circulate relatively vigorously. In the north the lack of availability of small denominations that could be practically employed for everyday transactions must have resulted in a rising emphasis on barter and local trade.[328] The contemporary decline in imported Mediterranean amphorae in the region tends to confirm the impression of an increasingly localized and primitive economy.[329] The recession in coinage also speaks volumes about the (in)ability of government to levy taxes in northern Gaul, since new issues were so intimately associated with an effective system for collecting existing moneys.[330]

The tendency toward diminuation and fortification of settlements, which had begun during the barbarian incursions and civil wars of the third century and continued into the fourth, accelerated during this period: a law of 420 AD permitted the fortification of private premises.[331] As significantly, the fifth century saw an apparent radical acceleration in many regions in pre-existing

326 See Cleary (2013), p. 348-351
327 Blackburn, M. “Money and Coinage”, in Fouracre (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge 1995), p. 667
328 Drinkwater & Elton (2002), p. 128-130. No silver coin was apparently minted in the Gaul after the reign of Jovinus (411-413), while the production of gold coin at Arles continued until the third quarter of the fifth century – Macgeorge (2002), p. 142. Imitations of imperial silver coin were still being produced in southern Gaul until the middle of the century – Halsall (2007), p. 349-350
329 Ibid.; Ward-Perkins (2005), p. 98-105
330 See Jones (1964), p. 108-9; Cleary (2013), p. 349-350
331 Whittaker (1993), p. 292; Sarti (2013), p. 39

patterns of reduction in both the number and size of towns and rural settlements.[332] As always, there was considerable local variation in these processes, with some of the worst affected regions being those in which political control was contested between Franks and Romans. The Aisne valley saw a dramatic collapse in the number of settlements, which had peaked at twenty-one in the third century, from fifteen settlements in the fourth century to just six in the fifth; the Ardennes saw a similarly marked process of apparent depopulation.[333] These developments coincided with the demise of the *civitas* structure that was the basis of Roman government north of the Loire.[334]

The traditional Roman villa, which had already been declining in favour of simpler and more fortified models in the fourth century, disappeared altogether in many parts of northern Gaul in this period; more than a few villas, ominously, were replaced by cemeteries.[335] There was a generalized shift toward hill forts and 'Germanic'-type sunken buildings, and although some regions, like the hinterland of Trier and Moselle valley, were less seriously affected, even these areas saw a definite shift toward fewer and more strongly fortified buildings.[336] Building materials employed in settlements shifted almost everywhere away from quarried stone, which was evidently no longer widely available, to wood; and decorations and amenities like bath-houses became less common, even as practical structures for purposes like metal-working became more frequent.[337]

It has been suggested that this was more to do with a shift of aristocratic interests under the influence of Christianisation,[338] and it is true that some Christian writings show a degree of disdain for 'profane' Roman arts such as

332 Halsall (2007), p. 348-351; Wightman (1985), p. 307-9, who also presents evidence for the conversion of the ampitheatre at Trier into a defensive structure in this period.

333 Haselgrove, C. 'La Romanisation de l'Habitat Rural dans la Vallée de l'Aisne d'Aprés les Prospectations de Surface et les Fouilles Récentes', in *Revue Archeologique de Picardie Special*, 11 (1996), p.109-114; MacGeorge (2002), p. 137-138; Wightman (1985), p. 308-9

334 Heather (2009), p. 313

335 Percival, J. "The fifth-century villa: new life or death postponed?", in Drinkwater and Elton (ed.) (2002), p. 163-4

336 Ibid.; Heather 2009, p. 312; Collins, R. & Weber, M. "Late Roman Military Architecture: An Introduction", in Collins, R., Symonds, M. & Weber, M. (ed.), *Roman Military Architecture on the Frontiers: Armies and their architecture in late Antiquity* (Oxford 2015), p. 3

337 Van Ossel, P and Ouzoulias, P. 'Rural settlement economy in Northern Gaul in the Late Empire: an overview', Journal of Roman Archaeology, 12 (2000), p. 133-160

338 Lewit, T. "Vanishing Villas: what happened to élite rural habitation in the West in the 5th-6th C?", in *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 19 (2006), p. 162-171

mosaic.[339] But the decline of bath-houses and other amenities is less easily explained in terms of Christianizing cultural preference, and mosaic was already absent in northern Gaul before the region was Christianized. Nonetheless, it is clear that although skilled manufacturing experienced a recession in this period, it did not die out, and some skills such as metalworking remained widespread. This, as the last section showed, occurred in the context of a widespread shift from shorter and more easily manufactures sword-blades to longer blades requiring greater effort and metallurgical sophistication.[340] Thus, the craftsmen of Gaul did not become technically inept so much as disinterested in work aimed at producing comfort. Ordinary social life apparently did not permit the time and luxury necessary for the perfection of many technical proficiencies, other than the manufacture of implements of combat.

Weapon burials, which had been increasingly evident in northern Gaul at the end of the fourth century, virtually died out in the middle of the fifth, before returning – or beginning again – on both sides of the Rhine at the end of the century, as the Frankish kings assumed unchallenged control over the wider region.[341] Franz Theuws contends that the mid-fifth century recession in burials contradicts the impression of a militarizing and barbarizing society, but this is not a necessary conclusion.[342] These late-fourth/early-fifth century weapon burying cultures – which we have seen were probably not 'Germanic' in origin – apparently experienced a recession similar to that in other aspects of material culture under the turbulent conditions of the mid-fifth century.[343] Most were concentrated in the areas – like the Meuse, Somme and Ainse valleys – that had been previously been somewhat insulated from the frontier in the fourth century, but became regions of contested political control in the fifth.[344] But after the

339 Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae* II.2

340 See above, p. 54-5. Pattern welding in weapon manufacture is first attested in the Rhineland and Northern Germany, radiating out into Gaul in the 4th-5th century. However, swordsmiths of the post-Roman period made much use of scrap metal, implying a decline in the mining of ores – see Tylecote, R. F. *A History of Metallurgy*, (London 1992), p. 64-75

341 Halsall (2010), p. 175-6.

342 Theuws (2009), p. 297

343 Macgeorge (2002), p. 137. 'Germanic' settlements in Toxandria also show signs of discontinuity in this period – Whittaker (1994), p. 166-7

344 Theuws (2009), p. 309. This, incidentally, somewhat undermines Halsall's argument (2007, p. 351) that weapon burials were a response to political crisis and insecurity, since the recession in burials corresponds to the probable intensification of upheavals of these kinds.

Franks assumed unchallenged political power late in the century, burials of weapons and other accoutrements of the warrior class, unlike deposits of most other crafted artefacts, began again in greater numbers. Thus the recession in weapon burials of the mid fifth century begins to look more like a lacuna in the development of burial practices denoting martial subcultures rather than a permanent decline.[345]

Certainly, the new generation of burials from the period of Frankish dominance display qualitative differences from their earlier counterparts. Many are significantly more lavish than anything found among the cultures that grew up under Roman power – the former had contained only spear heads, arrows, axes and in a few later cases swords and shield bosses, whereas the latter contained more elaborate swords and bosses, spurs and horse furniture, and richer scabbards and dress items featuring jewels and precious metals.[346] Peter Heather has argued that the burial of Childeric at Tournai in c. 481 was a watershed in this respect, resembling as it did in some of its features the splendid eastern burials of the Huns who had so recently intervened in Frankish politics. This deduction is persuasive, especially in light of burial sites like Gelduba, a Roman fort on the left bank of the Rhine taken over by the Franks in the later fifth century. Here, burials apparently informed by that of Childeric coexisted with Roman inhumations in the fifth century, which then began to adopt the same funerary items, attesting a high degree of acculturation to the new burial practices among the pre-existing population.[347]

But the pre-existence of weapon-burying subcultures in northern Gaul, which receded but did not entirely die out in the early fifth century; and the frequent proximity of many later fifth-century burials to these earlier fifth century

345 In support of this position, see Effros, B. *Merovingian mortuary archaeology and the making of the early middle ages* (Berkeley 2003), p. 108-110, citing Halsall in Pohl & Reimitz (ed.) (2000).

346 Halsall (2010), p. 173; Whittaker (1993), p. 293

347 Heather (2009), p. 318-320; . The dating of all lavish late-5th century burials after 481 is not universally agreed – See Halsall, G. "Childeric's grave, Clovis' succession, and the origins of the Merovingian kingdom", in G. Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul* (Leiden 2010), p. 184-5, who persuasively calls into question the somewhat circular arguments for regarding Childeric's burial as the first of an entirely new kind. See also, Schmauder, M. "The relationship between Frankish *gens* and *regnum*: a proposal based on the archaeological evidence" in Goetz, H.-W., Jarnut, J. & Pohl, W. (ed.), (2003), p. 305

predecessors – including at Gelduba – should not be ignored.[348] In the last chapter we noted that the weapon-buriers of the fourth century, who extended from the Rhine to the Loire (being concentrated in the river valleys connected to the Rhine frontier and the *litus Saxonicum*) were most likely overwhelmingly mixed and native Gallic rather than imported groups.[349] The recession in the physical traces of these cultures, which coincided with a generalized recession in material remains, did not mean that these groups had disappeared. And it may be that the weapon burying of the incoming elite Franks was influenced by the traditions of the militarized subcultures of the lands they occupied as well as the more lavish burials of Scythia. Childeric's burial – possibly the first of the new distinctly Frankish kind – and his probable capital, was located not in the traditional Frankish heartlands of the Rhine or even Toxandria, but in the south-east of the kingdom at Tournai. This site was well within the bounds of the former weapon burying cultures of northern Gaul, virtually equidistant to the Seine and the Rhine, and with easy access to the *litus saxonicum*.[350] It was apparently from here that the new style of burial radiated out northward into more traditional Frankish territory and southward into Gaul. Thus if there was indeed an aspect of public spectacle to these elaborate burials, that spectacle was inclusively aimed at Clovis's Frankish and Gallic subjects in common, and would have held more cultural resonance with the latter.

It should also be noted that, even given the clear gaps in the archaeological research, weapon burial was not a trait typically associated with Frankish power evenly throughout their domains, but apparently was only practised by a section of the warrior class under Frankish power, just as it had only represented a fraction of the militarized cultures of late-Roman Gaul.[351] Thus, rather than seeing a militarized subculture entailing burials disappearing in northern Gaul in the mid fifth century and being succeeded by a separate Frankish weapon

348 Ibid., Map 12; Theuws (2009), Figure 8; Heather (2009), p. 320

349 See previous chapter.

350 In striking distance, indeed, to two late-4th/earlier-5th century weapon burials, although such burials were not as common around Tournai as they were in the Meuse region. See Theuws (2009), p. 309-311 & Fig. 8, citing Böhme, H. W. *Germanische Grabfunde des 4 und 5 Jarhunderts zwischen unterer Elbe und Loire* (Munich 1996).

351 Ibid.; cf. Theuws, F. & Alkemade, M. "A Kind of Mirror for Men: Sword depositions in Late Antique northern Gaul", in Theuws, F & Nelson, J. (eds.), *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden 2000), 401-476, p. 426-7

burying culture, we should picture a process by which some – but not all – of the incoming Frankish elites came under the influence of weapon burying traditions both from the east and from northern Gaul, sparking a modified revival of those traditions among newly combined incoming and native warrior groups. Such mutual influence between new elite Frankish and older Gallic weapon burying cultures would have helped to smooth the process by which the incoming Franks assimilated with the existing military subcultures of northern Gaul, in a similar way to that in which the adoption of Christianity (also associated with certain grave goods) helped to fuse incoming and existing military elites.

3.3 – The Political and Social character of the Frankish Kingdoms and their Armies

The later-fifth and early sixth centuries witnessed the creation of extensive domains under Frankish kings with highly heterogeneous populations. The Frankish armies, too, absorbed an unknown but certainly substantial quantity of warriors from the conquered regions. It was in this context that the Salic Laws and the social life described in Gregory of Tours emerged. According to the persuasively argued schema of Patrick Geary, such moments of legislation set the cap on the development of the new barbarian kingdoms' identities, which were forged through collective participation in warfare.[352] What, then, was the specific character of the Frankish kingdoms under Clovis, relative to their neighbours and predecessors? This section will focus on the themes of identity, political coherence, and synthesis between incoming and pre-existing military cultures in northern Gaul.

A recurrent theme in discussion of the emerging Frankish kingdoms is the difficulty of the evidence for their sense of ethnic identity prior to, and even after, their takeover of northern Gaul.[353] Archaeologically, the emergence of signs of specifically Frankish elite material culture, in the form of furnished

352 Geary, P. J. "Barbarians and Ethnicity", in Bowersock, G. W., Brown, P. & Grabar, O. *Late Antiquity: A guide to the postclassical world* (Cambridge 1999), p. 108

353 Goetz, H.-W. "*Gens*, kings and kingdoms: the Franks", in Goetz, H.-W., Jarnut, J. & Pohl, W. (ed.) (2003), p. 310-318; Pohl, W. "Telling the difference: signs of ethnic identity", in Pohl & Reimitz (eds.) (1998), p. 17-51

inhumations, are (as we have seen) belated and uneven, occurring mainly within a hundred kilometres of the Franks' original lands between the Somme and the Lower Rhine.[354] This may have more to do with the fact that the Franks did not practice inhumation before their movement southward and Christianisation brought them under the influence of these types of funerary practice,[355] but the fact remains that the narrative record of Frankish power is only fractionally reflected in the archaeological evidence of Frankish settlement.[356] We are similarly bereft of evidence for the Frankish language – which seems in any case to have been divided into several dialects – until the scattered phrases made available through the 'Malberg Glosses', and certainly we have no such detailed guide as that provided for the Goths by Ulfilas' biblical translations.[357]

There is also a lack of literary evidence that the Franks placed much emphasis on their ethnic affiliations. Outsiders like Cassiodorus, who wrote to Clovis on behalf of king Theodoric of the Ostrogoths, continued to define the Franks as a Germanic warrior race just as his fourth century predecessors had done, but whether this attitude had more to do with present knowledge or a classicizing archaism is open to question.[358] The laws produced by the Franks, unlike those of their contemporaries in Visigothic Spain, certainly did not show much interest in Frankish identity. Only in the later prologue appended in the seventh century was the military might of the Frankish people stridently evoked.[359] In fact it is the term *ingenuus* – freeman – rather than *Francus* that forms the key legal category in the Salic Law. And unlike the Roman laws, which were imitated by the Visigoths, the Salic Law placed no restrictions on intermarriage between Franks and Romans.[360] It has been observed that Gregory of Tours' *Histories*, unlike the later chronicle of Fredegar, actually shows scant concern for ethnic qualities.[361]

354 Heather (2009), p. 346-7; Schmauder (2003), p. 299-302
355 Cf. Halsall (2010), p. 174
356 Effros (2003), p. 109; Schmauder 2003, p. 280-1, 305
357 Goetz (2003), p. 314
358 Cassiodorus, *Letters*, II.41
359 Wood (1994), p. 109. On *Lex Salica*, see below.
360 Leges.Visig. 3.1.2 / Cod.Theo. 3.14.1 (373); Liebeschuetz (1998), p. 139-140
361 Goffart, W. "Foreigners in the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours", in *Florilegium* 4 (1982), p. 96-99

None of this, however, adds up to a positive case that Frankish ethnic identity was not a source of political solidarity or military loyalty, or that it was not based to some extent on a core of traditions originating beyond the Roman frontiers. The Franks of the fifth century had no reason to forget – and many causes to resort to – the kind of ethnic claims to loyalty alluded to in Ammianus' account of Silvanus and Malarichus in the fourth. The letters of Cassiodorus and Bishop Avitus of Vienne to Clovis illustrate that the Frankish identity continued to be thought of by their neighbours as culturally and politically important.[362] And while a distinctly Frankish funerary culture was late in developing and probably not universally adopted, it is much more plentiful than the ephemeral remains of the Burgundians, or the Goths in Aquitaine.[363] The distinctly non-Roman features of the Salic Laws suggests that their ascription to four Frankish wise men 'from beyond the Rhine', though late, related to a genuine claim to origins in Frankish folk memory.[364]

Thus in considering Frankish identity we are left in the somewhat unintuitive position of at once concluding that it was a real and relevant factor in the formation of their kingdoms, but at the same time that it was not clearly based in the most common markers of shared identity assumed in modern scholarship: language and material culture. This problem may, however, have more to do with the flawed nature of our anthropological assumptions than anything else. It has been observed that peoples differing in language and material life are quite capable of thinking of themselves as sharing identities, and that shared material trappings can disguise multiple distinct identities.[365] The Nuer tribe of Sudan may be particularly instructive: they are archaeologically indistinguishable from their ancestral enemies and neighbours, the Dinka, while their languages are

362 Goetz (2003), p. 329

363 Nixon, N. E. V. "Relations between Visigoths and Romans in fifth-century Gaul", in Drinkwater, J. & Elton, H. (eds.), *Fifth-century Gaul: A crisis of Identity?* (2002) 2002, p. 64-5

364 Wormald, P. "The *Leges Barbarorum: law and ethnicity in the post-Roman West"*, in Goetz, H.-W., et al. (eds.), *Regna and Gentes: the Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World* (Leiden, 2003), p. 23-30

365 Heather (2009), p. 14, citing Edmund Leach; Schmauder (2003), p. 283, citing Aouni, "Das spatantik-frumittelalterliche Graberfeld von Julich – die 'einfachen' Gurtelgarnituren" (1998), Siegmund, F. *Alemennen und Franken*, and Bohme, "Der Frankenkonig Childerich..." (1994)

sufficiently similar to facilitate mutual communication.[366] If we were looking for them a thousand years hence, nothing in the archaeological record would betray their unity and sense of difference and hostility to their neighbours. The shared markers of distinct Frankish identity in the fifth century may similarly have been embodied in practices and signs too ephemeral to be preserved.

Politically speaking, it is perfectly clear that the ethnic affiliations of the Franks were not of such a kind as to inspire unwavering unity. While Franks had frequently troubled the empire in the fourth century, other Franks had served its interests just as effectively, and those who did oppose the empire had never formed such a large coalition as that assembled by the Alemanni at Strasbourg or the Goths under Radagaisus.[367] Historians have traditionally divided the Franks into the south-western *Salii* and the north-eastern *Ribuarii*, but even this is now seen as a potential misreading of an inconsistent Roman nomenclature that disguises a more complicated tapestry of subgroups.[368] This basic picture does not seem to have changed much by the late fifth century: Childeric may have styled himself king, in contrast to most of his ancestors, but he remained the king of just one Frankish subgroup.[369] Gregory of Tours even describes his antagonist Aegidius as being acclaimed king of the Franks in his absence, hinting that more than a few Franks were still serving in the armies of his 'Roman' domain.[370]

This rule of disunity was broken under Clovis, who reportedly led the Franks in a series of increasingly ambitious campaigns from the 480s to the 500s.[371] But the extent and quality of the political unity brought about even in this period is open to question. If we accept the general sequence of conquests proposed by Gregory, it looks as though many of the victories attributed to Clovis were more likely collective enterprises that brought coalitions of Frankish leaders – several of whom may have styled themselves kings – together for joint campaigns.

366 Evans-Pritchard, E. *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford 1940), p. 125-6
367 Campbell (1999), p. 393-4; Heather, "Northwest" (2018), p. 16-17
368 Goetz 2003, p. 313-314, citing Springer, M. "*Riparii* – Ribuarier – Rheinfranken nebst einigen Bemerkungen zum Geographen von Ravenna", in *Die Franken und die Alemannen* (2000)
369 Heather (2009), p. 307
370 Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, II. 27
371 Geary (1999), p. 124

However, Gregory's timeline, which puts Frankish external conflicts first and leaves the dirty work of internal unification until later, is dubious.[372] Whatever the case, the Frankish move toward political unity was belated and equivocal. Given his subsequent division of the kingdom between his sons, the campaign against internal rivals that saw Clovis emerge as unchallenged king of all the Franks looks like an aberrant deviation from the ordinary rule of political fragmentation, which even Clovis himself saw as a personal campaign intended to place his sons at the apex of – rather than an attempt to fundamentally change – the multipolar structure of Frankish politics.[373]

There is a clear contrast here between the Franks and the other barbarian groups that were granted or carved out domains in the empire in the fifth century. The Goths, Burgundians and Vandals had all, from a quite early stage, established a unitary leadership based around a single royal dynasty who formed the unchallenged core of their armies and domains, but among the Franks such processes were late and partial. This surely had much to do with the contrasting geographical and political circumstances of Frankish settlement: the Goths and Vandals, travelling thousands of miles from their original homelands, had unity imposed upon them as an exigency of the vicissitudes of negotiation, service and conflict with an empire by which they were surrounded on all sides; while the Burgundians may also have been forced to politically coalesce under Roman auspices in the process of their settlements by Jovinus in 407 and Aetius in 443.[374] Settlement of the Franks on Roman lands, by contrast, had occurred in a piecemeal fashion, on relatively familiar territory, without evidence for clear agreement on the nature of the relationship between incoming and existing groups.[375]

However, somewhat counter-intuitively, the Franks' relative lack of political unity did not necessarily inhibit their military efforts against external rivals. Even if Gregory's timeline artificially prioritises the external conquests of Clovis, it looks like the Frankish leadership remained divided when they fought the Gallic

372 Wood (1994), p. 45-8. For Gregory's clear ideological preference for external warfare, which may have coloured his reconstruction of Clovis's career, see Chapter 5.
373 Heather 2009, p. 307; Goetz 2003, p. 326
374 Frassetto, M. *The Early Medieval World* (Santa Barbara 2013), p. 132-3
375 Wood (1994), p. 38-40; Heather (2009), p. 317

kingdom of Syagrius, if not the Alamanni and the Visigoths.[376] Thus it seems that the Franks came together more frequently for joint military adventure than as a single political unit under the undisputed power of one leader. There is a stark contrast here between the political behaviour of the Franks and their Roman predecessors, whose demise has been persuasively linked to a persistent tendency to prioritise internal conflict over the defeat of external enemies.[377]

Another feature of the Frankish kingdoms was a lack of Roman culture and institutions relative to their southern counterparts, who were able to draw on considerably more complete systems of taxation and administration.[378] As mentioned earlier, only a few enclaves in northern Gaul retained the trappings of Roman material culture, and Roman administrative practice seems similarly to have lapsed throughout most of the region.[379] Aquitaine, which fell under Frankish control a little later, was much more Romanized (though by no means free of militarization) at the end of the fifth century, and this expansion lent the emergent kingdom a much more Roman character: Clovis accepted an honorary consulship the following year, and processed through Tours clad in imperial garb.[380] But the capital never moved further south than Paris, and the regions south of the Loire were never as securely held as the lands further north. Neither

376 Some internal evidence implies that his Gregory's ordering of events is not entirely innaccurate – see Wood (1994), p. 49, 102

377 cf. Ibid. Again, the Nuer of Sudan provide an interesting comparison. Obviously the "ancephelous kinship state" of the Nuer is much more politically fractured than that of the Franks, but it is not necessarily less literate, and it illustrates the extent to which cultural tradition can make military coalitions and concerted action possible even in the total absence of clear rulers or bureaucracy. (Evans-Pritchard 1940, p. 140-148.) This point again raises the question of how far the military leaders of the period were actually able to simply use their armies, as opposed to negotiating with the collected inclinations and demands of those armies, including their learned inclinations to violence. (See previous Chapter, p. 30-31) We saw how when accounts of the northern Roman armies become detailed in Ammianus, the agency of the army came into sharp relief as the army repeatedly forced their commanders' hands. He also relates how before the battle of Strasbourg, an Alemannic leader was overthrown by his men after refusing to participate in the joint venture, (*History*, XVI) and we may wonder if similar pressures were operating among the Franks of the late fifth and early sixth centuries. Certainly Gregory of Tours, though failing to provide anything like the detail of Ammianus, implies that a certain degree of aggressive insubordination was fairly ordinary among the Franks at this time: the man who Clovis slays for demonstratively destroying a vase does so in the context of an apparently semi-democratic process of division of spoils, and he evidently does not expect the equally demonstrative punishment suddenly meted out on him by Clovis subsequently. (*Histories*, II, 27)

378 Pohl (2002), p. 4

379 See above, p. 52-3, 95-8.

380 Gregory of Tours, *Histories* II.38; see McCormick (1986), p. 335-7

did weapon burials proliferate south of this line as in northern Gaul, suggesting that the native population did not as readily accept their new political elites, and that cultural assimilation was much more limited.[381]

This returns us to the theme of the integration of the incoming Franks with their host populations in northern Gaul, and the central role that may have been played by cultural similarities, in particular the comparable and mutually influential traditions of armed violence among the Franks and the militarized Gallic subcultures. The timeline of Frankish conquests indicates that this integration, though achieved only with considerable difficulty and not without recourse to war, was exceptionally successful. In fact, the addition of Syagrius's defeated forces to the Frankish hosts appears to have imbued them with an unprecedented ambition for territorial expansion. After a twenty-year struggle for control over the region between the Somme and the Seine, armies under the Frankish kings went on to conquer the Thuringii and Alamanni within ten years, subjected the Burgundians to tribute within fifteen, and drove the Visigoths from most of Aquitaine in just over twenty.[382] In other words, even taking into account subsequent losses to the Ostrogoths, the armies of Clovis conquered more than four times as much territory in the generation after their takeover of the kingdom of Syagrius in 486 than they had done in the generation prior to 486.

This extraordinary military success has been attributed to the relative political and military weakness and disunity of the regions penetrated by the Franks.[383] In the case of the Burgundians, who were clearly a highly opportune target, this is a persuasive suggestion. But Visigothic and particularly Alamannic vulnerability to attack prior to the Frankish invasions only seems to be established by reading back after the fact: there is no evidence that the Alamanni were substantially weaker in late fifth century than they had been a century earlier, when they survived repeated attacks from large Roman forces[384] with better supply lines

381 Goetz (2003), p. 320-321; Heather (2009), p. 308
382 Gregory of Tours II.27-37
383 Heather (2009), p. 306
384 Ammianus XV-XVI; see previous chapter. For an extensive discussion of this question in relation to the Franks and Alamanni in particular, which persuasively undermines claims that the Franks won out because of superior organization, but does ultimately conclude that the Alamanni were militarily vulnerable, see Drinkwater, J. F. *The Alamanni and Rome, 213-496 (Caracella to Clovis)*, (Oxford 2007), p. 350-363

than the Frankish armies under Clovis. Moreover, the image of the divided former provinces of the empire weakly capitulating under Frankish pressure should be qualified by the observation that each of those regions was comparable in size to the Frankish power base between the Seine and the Lower Rhine, the dominance of which had taken a generation to establish. The Visigoths in particular controlled a vast region extending from Spain to Aquitaine, but while this extensive territory apparently did nothing to enhance Visigothic military might, the Frankish armies apparently benefited considerably from their northern Gallic acquisitions.

It is in this context that we should view the often discussed passage in Procopius, which offers a brief but fascinating summary exposition of the Frankish takeover of northern Gaul…

> "By that time it so happened that the Arborychi had become soldiers of the Romans. And the Germans [Franks], wishing to make this people subject to themselves, since their territory adjoined their own and they had changed the government under which they had lived from of old, began to plunder their land and, being eager to make war, marched against them with their whole people. But the Arborychi proved their valour and loyalty to the Romans and showed themselves brave men in this war, and since the Germans were not able to overcome them by force, they wished to win them over and make the two peoples kin by intermarriage. This suggestion the Arborychi received not at all unwillingly; for both, as it happened, were Christians. And in this way they were united into one people, and came to have great power."[385]

Procopius, writing in the mid-sixth century in Constantinople, was certainly not the best-informed commentator, but his description has value for the conceptual schema it applies to the Frankish takeover of northern Gaul. The 'Arborychi' are portrayed as a Gallic *gens*, clearly grown up in the empire and not described as barbarians, yet also totally distinct from the 'Roman' soldiers of Gaul, who are

385 Procopius, *Wars* V.12; for a brief discussion of his perspective and possible sources, see Cameron, A. *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (Berkeley 1985), p. 210-212

described by Procopius as self-consciously retaining the trappings of Roman military culture.[386] Thus, rather than a bipartite division between incoming Franks and occupied Romans, Procopius offers us a tripartite division of Franks, Romans, and culturally independent Gallic people who had long served the empire, but were nevertheless similar enough to the Franks to be rapidly integrated into their society through intermarriage. And he clearly considers the growth of Frankish military power to have been primarily founded upon their fusion with this independent culture, rather than the addition of self-consciously Roman units to the Frankish armies.[387]

This tripartite image chimes with the evidence of the development of semi-independent militarized quasi-ethnic subcultures emerging in northern Gaul in the later fourth and fifth centuries.[388] A few of these were doubtless already self-consciously Frankish, making assimilation a matter of course after 491. But these represented the beginning of a continuum of militarized subcultures within Gaul, which resembled that of the Franks to varying degrees and therefore could be assimilated with varying degrees of alacrity. Again, the example of the Nuer of Sudan may be instructive: despite their inter-generational hostility to the neighbouring Dinka tribe, the paucity of linguistic and material differences between the bitter rivals made possible the the rapid assimilation of former Dinka to Nuer ethnic identities where Nuer political power was established over Dinka areas.[389] In northern Gaul, the 'Arboychi' - which we might identify with the weapon-burying subcultures, with the recruiting pools that provided the Cornuti, Celtae, Batavi etc, and with the kind of paramilitary groups licensed by Julian – were similarly linguistically and materially comfortable with the newly dominant Frankish subculture, and had already lost much of their sense of cultural identity with the empire, even if they had continued to serve it loyally until Syagrius's defeat.[390] And the Franks, having already absorbed several neighbouring tribes in the course of the fourth and early fifth centuries, were a

386 Ibid; James 1997, p. 22
387 Cf. Bachrach (1973), p. 5-6
388 See previous chapter, p. 63-76
389 Evans-Pritchard 1940, p. 126
390 cf. Schmauder (2003), p. 281-3, n. 40/42, citing Bohme, "Soldner und Siedler" (p. 92), who concludes that the weapon-burying cultures of the late fourth century enshrined gentile identities, but was careful to describe these as 'non-Roman' rather than 'Germanic' in nature.

relatively broad and inclusive group already.[391] This was a familiarity that the new ruling *gentes* of the other barbarian kingdoms did not enjoy with their new subjects.

Thus the proliferation of Frankish-type burials in the sixth century among apparently non-Frankish native groups – even in places like Frenouville in Normandy, where such weapon burials appeared without apparent Frankish immigration to the area[392] – seem to describe part of the process by which northern Gallic militarized subcultures assimilated with the newly dominant political class.[393] It may be relevant that the renaissance in weapon burials in the new Frankish kingdom is did not take off until the 520s, in that this implies that the inhumations were likely veterans of the combined forces of 491 and after, rather than the more exclusively Frankish veterans of Syagrius' defeat. It is also noteworthy that the new generation of burials began before the conversion of Clovis, but accelerated thereafter, implying that Christianization catalysed the spread of the Frankish-type inhumation rituals that marked the assimilation of Frankish and Gallic militarized subcultures. This provides some circumstantial support for the claim of Procopius that the fusion of the Franks and 'Arborychi' was facilitated by their shared Christianity, although not all weapon-buriers were necessarily Christian.

This returns us to the persuasive suggestion – which is emphatically supported by the perspective of developmental psychology – that the collective identities of the barbarian *gentes* in the context of the newly formed kingdoms were profoundly shaped by their shared experience of war.[394] Indeed, the success of Frankish culture was probably contingent on Clovis's military victories after 491, which would have formed seminal moments in the psychological development of many warriors in his heterogeneous armies. Clovis was also surrounded by the

391 Ibid, p. 276-8

392 Gardner, A. *An archaeology of identity: Soldiers and society in Late Roman Britain* (Oxford 2007), p. 259

393 Perin, P. & Kazanski, M. "Identity and ethnicity during the era of migrations and barbarian kingdoms in light of archaeology in Gaul", in R. W. Mathisen & D. Shanzer, *Romans, Barbarians, an the Transformation of the Roman World: Cultural interaction and the creation of identity in Late Antiquity* (Farnham 2011), p. 302; Schmauder (2003), p. 284, with citations - "...behind the political term 'Merovingian realm' one cannot archaeologically recognise a closed ethnicity during the fifth and sixth centuries."

394 A perspective influentially argued by Geary (1999), p. 108

same reputation for personal participation in battle and other violence by which some of the fifth century *magistri militum* had established a sense of affinity with their warriors, demonstratively slaying enemies, erstwhile underlings, and even relatives by his own hand.[395] Thus the Frankish leadership was culturally well-placed to command the loyalty of the Gallic militarized subcultures: where the late empire had stratified society according to a schema in which killing in service of the state was rather low on the social spectrum, the reputed conduct of the Frankish kings made violence a central plank of elite conduct.

Another significant achievement of Clovis's generation for the establishment and promotion of Frankish identity was the *Pactus Legis Salicae*. This law code, probably produced shortly before Clovis's death, will be fully treated in the next chapter, but should be introduced here. In this law code, the term 'freeman' or simply 'man' is generally preferred to 'Frank', and an explicit legal definition of the term is not provided, although the two are quite clearly interchangeable. A third term, which sounds more technical – *barbarum Salicum* – is also occasionally used, again interchangeably or sometimes additionally to the other two. These terms are contrasted to 'Romans' in the law, who only enjoy half the *wergeld* of their fully free counterparts.[396] Thus the Salic Law set out in its pages a bipartite division between Romans and barbarians. But as we have seen, it was established in a context where many of the Franks' most important new subjects were were already somewhat estranged from Roman identity, forming a continuum of subcultures that variously displayed 'Roman' and 'barbarian' features. In reducing such a complicated cultural milieu to this binary opposition, in which everything that was not 'Roman' was 'barbarian' and vice versa, the laws may have been instrumental in subsuming these many subcultures into the already quite open Frankish identity.

The other potentially important innovation of Salic Law with respect to the growth of Frankish identity, which will be fully considered in the next chapter, was its approach to violence. For even as the conduct of the Frankish kings seemed to validate personal violence as an elite and Frankish activity, the

395 Gregory, *Histories* II. 27, 37, 40-42; see above, p. 87-90
396 *Pactus* XIV.2, XLI.2. On *wergeld*, see next chapter.

Frankish laws represented a substantial withdrawal of public power from the control of social violence.[397] This basic fact has been frequently observed, but its psychological relevance in the context of cultural rapprochement between incoming militarized elites and existing militarized subcultures has not yet been discussed. We saw in the first chapter how those who have been frequently exposed to violence – such as combat veterans – become more likely to commit further acts of violence, including in illegitimate contexts, and how ancient warfare was a particularly intense theatre of violence with especially profound psychological implications for its participants.[398] Thus, those most likely to fall foul of the Roman laws against violence were the very soldiers who were expected to enforce those laws. Therefore by softening the legal consequences of violence, the Frankish laws demonstrated an empathy and solidarity between lawgivers and the violent subcultures whose loyalty they sought to command that had not existed under imperial rule.

In psychological perspective we can see this change of emphasis in legal responses to violence not so much as an alien import arbitrarily imposed on Roman society, and more as a set of rules which were better adapted to the changing sociological conditions of the western armies, which were increasingly integrated into local civil society. Under such conditions of integration, in which serving warriors increasingly carried their accoutrements (both physical and psychological) into ordinary social life, the Roman principle of confining violence to officially sanctioned contexts had become something of an anachronism, against which a paradigm shift was arguably overdue by the end of the fifth century. Barbarian laws were better adapted to the natural tendency of violence to move from official to unofficial contexts, and easier on the psychologically predictable excesses of the warriors who the new barbarian kings sought to rule and command.

397 This is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

398 Chapter 1. The general observation that veterans are more violence prone is borne out in the late-Roman context by the legislation of Constantius – *Cod.Theo.* VII.20.7.

* * *

At the start of the fifth century the Roman imperial system of military administration and supply was still in working order. But the army was increasingly relying on militarized subcultures from beyond and within the frontiers – which disdained the trappings of *Romanitas* and were somewhat disdained by those who still embodied it – to provide its manpower. Quite early in the century, the tax base was undermined, and the prospects of holding together a large army in northern Gaul whose continued existence relied on the prospect of regular pay quickly faded. But another model of military organization was now available in the form of the barbarian groups that were now encroaching into Roman territory. In this model military service was a cultural norm and social privilege rather than a form of paid employment, and there are many signs that such a cultural conception of military service was already gaining traction within Gaul prior to the invasion of the Franks and others, not only among imported barbarian groups, but also among native Gallic peoples, and indeed in the Roman army itself.

We cannot know the proportion of fighting and agreement entailed in this process, though it seems certain that both were involved. But given the evident decline in material culture, reduction in population, and disruption of systems of imperial taxation and administration, the argument that the Frankish kings consensually took over Roman provinces and armies cannot be sustained. Nonetheless, the Franks, who already in the course of the fourth century had probably absorbed several other archaeologically indistinguishable groups – the Bructerii, Chamavi, and Ampsivarii – proved after their entry into northern Gaul to be similarly open and capable of assimilating once hostile warrior groups. Probably the most vital part of this process of integration was the shared experience of war, for which the Frankish kings provided plenty of opportunities. But we need not regard this either as a deliberate ploy by Clovis or a happy coincidence. It was the direct result of the parallel and so often antagonistic development of violent subcultures on both sides of the Rhine, whose shared affinity for warfare was the outcome of their violence-oriented interaction over decades.

This newly formed kingdom, with its uneven administrative basis and heterogeneous patchwork of military subcultures, many of which were being absorbed into the newly dominant Frankish identity with varying degrees of alacrity, formed the context within which the Salic Laws were produced. We have already seen how these laws may have aided the integration process by implying that everything non-Roman was Frankish, and by regarding personal violence with relative equanimity. The next chapter will examine those laws and their provisions in detail, seeking to understand the social – and, for the first time, their psychological – implications for the growing class of Frankish warriors who were their principle subject. It will be suggested that the permissions and incentives for violence presented in the *Lex Salica* provide a window into the mechanisms by which military preparedness – including the associated violent behavioural profiles – was continually reproduced among a social elite who were frequently involved in war but did not employ the kind of military training and camp discipline associated with earlier Roman armies.

Chapter 4: Violence in the Salian Laws

So far all of our information about the Franks and other military subcultures who comprised the post-Roman Frankish kingdoms has come from sources which look askance at them from the outside, so to speak. The creation of *Lex Salica* at the beginning of the sixth century offers us, for the first time, an expression of the rapidly evolving culture of the nascent Frankish kingdoms which is internal and sympathetic to their culture. The laws have sometimes been disdained as a source for the cultural and legal history of the kingdoms, but from the perspective of the evaluation and psychology of violence in contemporary warrior culture, they are quite impossible to ignore. For the laws present an incredibly detailed picture of the respective values of a wide array of violent acts, both in relation to one-another, and in relation to various mundane non-violent offences. Not only did the killing of a freeman have a price – the *wergeld* or *leodi*[399] – but so too did all kinds of other acts, each of which was thereby located on a specific rung of a ladder of perceived seriousness. In creating this scale, the Frankish laws construct exactly the kind of "strict laws of equivalence" between the material and symbolic values which Pierre Bourdieu considered to be constitutive of cultural *habitus*.[400] Therefore in this chapter, the provisions of the laws will be assessed in detail, considering their implications for social relations between participants and victims of the elite subculture of violence in the early Frankish kingdoms. But first it will be necessary to consider the objections to the use of *Lex Salica* as an historical source, and to make the case for their vitality and utility.

4.1 – The Utility of *Lex Salica*

Historians have long struggled with the Salian laws as an historical source. There is considerable uncertainty and debate surrounding the text in terms of

399 The latter term is that used in the 'Malberg Glosses', which give apparently Frankish equivalents of the Latin terms employed in the laws. See below.

400 Bourdieu (1990), p. 122. See Section 2.

both authorship and audience.[401] Even the earliest preamble is a probable later interpolation, and evidence for the reception, use and development of the laws is lacking. And while internal evidence dates the *Pactus* to the early sixth century at the latest, the earliest extant manuscripts are of the later-seventh century, confuting any attempt to conclusively estimate the practical availability and use of the written laws in the Merovingian period.[402] The historian working on barbarian codes cannot but look with envy on the relatively plentiful evidence of legal development and records of judicial process provided to students of Roman and later medieval legal systems.[403] Indeed, the barbarian law codes have struggled to step out of the shadow of their much more influential and (in most respects) thorough, Roman counterparts, in comparison to which they are apt to appear somewhat primitive and inept.[404] Prior to the 1960s, the opinion nonetheless prevailed that the laws provided an accurate guide to the ancient traditions of the barbarian tribes, but since the arrival of anthropology on the methodological scene these comfortable certainties have been called into question, as awareness has grown of the potential distance between normative prescriptions of the type contained in the codes and the practical realities of dispute settlement.[405]

401 Charles-Edwards, T. M. "Law in the Western kingdoms between the fifth and the seventh century", in A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins and M. Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History Volume 14: Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, AD 425–600* (Cambridge 2001), p. 273-5

402 Wormald, P. "The *Leges Barbarorum:* law and ethnicity in the post-Roman West", in Goetz, H.-W., et al. (eds.), *Regna and Gentes: the Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World* (Leiden, 2003), p. 28-9. For a good summary discussion of the extant manuscripts, see McKitterick, R. *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge University, 1989), p. 40-60. Faulkner, T. *Law and Authority in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge 2016), p. 13-15 points to more recent developments in scholarly thinking on the origins and functions of *Lex Salica*. A discussion of its influence and comparison of its provisions on injury to those of other barbarian *leges* may be found in Oliver, L. *The Body Legal in Barbarian Law*, (Toronto 2011). It has also been suggested that the laws could originate in earlier, unattested military laws used among barbarian *dediticii* of the Roman army – See Poly, J.-P. "Liberté, lien des guerriers, livre de droit. La *Lex Salica* entre coutume barbare et loi Romain", in *Clio Themis* 10 (2016)

403 Harries, J. "Violence, victims and legal tradition in Late Antiquity", in Drake (ed.) (2006)

404 Charles-Edwards (2001), p. 277

405 Lambert, T. "Theft, homicide and crime in late Anglo-Saxon law", in *Past & Present* 214.1 (2012), p. 3-4. For an early twentieth century assessment of the utility of the laws, see for instance Dill, S. *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age* (London 1926), p. 40-48

According to one popular line of historiographical thought, suggested by Patrick Wormald and extended by several others, the law codes represent little more than barbarian kings playing at *Romanitas*, aping the Roman legislators to enhance their reputations, without the capacity and perhaps without the intent to see the laws broadly implemented and enforced in a meaningful way.[406] In support of this argument, lack of manuscripts prior to the ninth century casts doubt upon their use up to that time, while problems of omission, confusion and repetition within those manuscripts have been deemed to imply that the laws were not intended for practical use.[407] The employment of Latin as the principle language of all the continental law codes was also considered by Wormald to indicate a lack of practical utility to elites who communicated primarily in Germanic dialects. Most importantly, as Wormald observed, the greater emphasis on oral culture in the post-Roman kingdoms should cause us to doubt whether the whole gamut of law is either represented in or based upon written texts. The opinion prevails among many that the law-codes should be seen more as ideological attempts to assert the pre-eminence of the barbarian kings than as practical guides to dispute and settlement. As a dual result of these types of criticisms, and the growing anthropological emphasis of research into post-Roman legal process, the evidence of law in action provided by charters has been preferred by some historians seeking to comprehend conflict and dispute settlement.[408]

But not all historians have turned away from the post-Roman law codes as sources for the social history of the barbarian kingdoms. Some have continued to treat the laws as vital clues to contemporary mores and practices. Ian Wood and Warren Brown, for instance, have used the Salian laws to think about various aspects of judicial process and violent dispute, unpersuaded by arguments

406 Wormald, P. "Lex Scripta and Verbum Regis", in P. Wormold, *Legal culture in the early medieval West*, (London 1999) [1977]; Gerberding, R. "The later Roman empire", in Fouracre, P. (ed.) *The new Cambridge medieval history volume 1: c. 500-c. 700* (Cambridge 1995), p. 32; Rio, A. "Charters, law codes and formulae: the Franks between theory and practice", in Fouracre, P. & Ganz, D. (eds.), *Frankland. The Franks and the world of the early middle ages: essays in honour of Dame Jinty Nelson* (Manchester 2008), p. 9-10

407 Wormald (1999), p. 14-15. For a detailed discussion of the some of the discrepancies and errors in the early manuscripts of *Lex Salica*, see Hessels and Kern (1880), p. xi-xxii

408 See the essays collected in Fouracre, P. & Davies, W. (eds.) *The settlement of disputes in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge 1986); idem (eds.) *Property and power in the early middle ages* (Cambridge 1995).

against their historical utility.[409] Others have taken on the criticisms levelled at the post-Roman laws more directly. In his article on the Burgundian laws, Peter Heather demonstrates that the Book of Constitutions was most likely the outcome of a developing legal tradition, which was responding to complications arising from real cases. This observation, which finds some circumstantial parallel in the Lombard laws, belies the argument that barbarian law-making was always a purely ideological rather practical exercise. Although this process of development is not equally apparent in the *Pactus Legis Salicae*, this may have to do with the greater influence of Roman legal tradition upon the codification of Burgundian law, which caused it to more closely imitate the Theodosian code in the ordering of its provisions.[410] Heather also argues that lack of thematic organization would by no means have made the codes unduly difficult to use practically, given their brevity.[411] The same observation applies to the *Pactus Legis Salicae*, which displays a certain amount of thematic organization, and is straightforward enough to navigate in spite of its inconsistencies.

Tom Lambert has made a similarly positive case for using the Anglo-Saxon codes, via a different argument, better to understand the transition from a culture of personal revenge to one in which king and state, rather than the family of the victim, became the principle agents in the punishment of homicide.[412] He points out that while the evidence of charters offers perspectives on legal process not provided by the law codes, their evidence is similarly limited, and potentially distorted, by the specific circumstances of their recording and preservation. The overwhelming majority address property disputes involving ecclesiastical institutions, their interest in the world beyond this narrow realm being understandably curtailed by the nature of their economic purpose and the

409 Wood, I. "Jural relations among the Franks and Alamanni", in I. Wood (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge 1998); Brown, W. C. *Violence in Medieval Europe* (New York 2011), p. 47-60

410 Heather, P. J. "Law and Society in the Burgundian kingdom", in Rio, A. (ed.), *Law, Custom and Justice in the early middle ages* (London 2011), p. 118-124. Robert Latrouche has suggested that the inclusion of *denarius* equivalents of the *solidus* compositions in the Salic Laws represented a seventh-century update, reflecting the decline of gold coin in favour of silver under the Merovingians – *The Birth of the Western Economy: Economic Aspects of the Dark Ages*, (New York 1961), p. 130-132. Certainly northwestern provinces of the late empire were not producing silver coins in large quantities or particularly regular weights.

411 Ibid.

412 Lambert (2012), p. 20-24

monastic context of their preservation.[413] The Anglo-Saxon laws on homicide, in Lambert's opinion, should be viewed as a representation and vehicle of the living customary arrangements surrounding feud. As evidence he cites the repetition of the same *wergeld* values across the centuries, which finds parallels in the Frankish kingdoms, albeit with much greater lacunae.

Indeed, Wormald himself was not convinced of the total practical inutility of the laws as sources for social history, the formulation of which he considered to be "...inconceivable without the assistance of men to whom Salic custom was directly familiar."[414] In reading the *Pactus* and other barbarian codes, with their many eccentric intricacies, he sensed a body of custom to which the laws have a connection, but which they do not wholly reflect. In a later paper, he also argued the case for viewing the seventh-century Kentish law codes as showing a marked line of development which strongly indicates that they had some practical purpose.[415] There is also the distinct possibility, pointed out in Wormald's work, that once written, the laws would have exerted a continuing influence upon the development of the customs from which they were derived. In a world of orally transmitted custom which was mutable by virtue of its orality, the relatively ossified presence of the written law codes would exert a gravitational effect upon disputed and ambiguous cases, when and where the codes were available for consultation.[416] Of course this last point – the availability of the law-codes to those actually seeking to settle disputes – will remain a matter for dispute. But the attention the Pippinids, as well as several Merovingian kings, devoted to re-issuing and updating the laws, strongly implies that they lost none of their cachet among the elites of the Frankish kingdoms in the centuries after their composition, and possibly even became more prominent over time.[417]

---

413 The Introduction to Davies & Fouracre (1995, p. 1-16), for instance, boldly opens with the statement that "charters…are much closer than are laws to the daily practices of men and women in the early middle ages", but goes on to narrow this conception of 'daily life' to transactions, disputes and rights over land.

414 Wormald (1977), p. 28-9; Rio, A. "Introduction", in Rio (ed.) (2011), p. 5-13

415 Wormald, P. "'Inter cetera bona...genti suae': Law-making and peace-keeping in the earliest English kingdoms", in *La Guistizia Nell'Alto Medioevo* XLII (1994)

416 Wormald (1977), n. 31, citing T. M Clanchy, "Remembering the Past and the Good Old Law", in *History* 55 (1970), p. 165-176

417 Drew (1991), p. 52; Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, ch. 29

The debate about the codes has perhaps suffered from the tendency to measure them according to the standards of their Roman predecessors,[418] and it may also be unduly harsh to dismiss the laws as symbolic rather than practical for want of written evidence of their use and reproduction. This is fundamentally an argument from silence. Lack of Merovingian manuscripts has been offered as evidence that the laws were not used sixth century, but the survival of Merovingian written material in general is so poor that the value of this observation is dubious. Older manuscripts may also have been lost due to Carolingian efforts to eliminate inaccurate and defective examples of the laws.[419] And even in the Carolingian period, when the copying and preservation of manuscripts assumed a new degree of importance, literate aspects of legal process were not dominant. In the immediate post-Roman period we have every reason to suspect that the significance of written documents to the operation of law had declined sharply.[420] In one of the few provisions on what looks like judicial process in the *Pactus*, for instance, failure to attend the *mallus* is to be established by the oaths of witnesses, and no reference is made to any written court record that should or could be cited to replace or supplement this oral expedient.[421]

Thus it may be somewhat naive to expect the operation of such a legal – or perhaps it is more appropriate to use the term customary – system to be well-represented in written form. It may even be fundamentally misguided to conceive of the customary system represented by the *Pactus* as something which was expected to play out in writing or even necessarily in court.[422] Again, the little procedural evidence offered us by the *Pactus* strongly implies a lack of bureaucratic means to ensure the involvement of the courts in dispute. Complainants were expected to make their own summonses, there do not seem to

418 Charles-Edwards (2001), p. 260; Wormald (2003), p. 21

419 Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne*, ch. 29; McKitterick, R. *The Carolingians and the written word* (Cambridge 1989), p. 42

420 Hen, Y. *Culture and religion in Merovingian Gaul: A.D. 481-751* (Leiden 1995), p. 41-2

421 *Pactus* LVI.2-3. Procedure for issuing summonses and demanding judgements was also apparently oral – *Pactus* I.3; LVII.1-3. For comparison of the summons procedure of *Lex Salica* to other contemporary codes, see Wood, I. "Disputes in late-fifth and sixth-century Gaul: some problems", in Davies, W. and Fouracre, P. *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe*, (Cambridge 1986), p. 10-11

422 See below.

be anything resembling dedicated court officials to bring disputing parties to book, and even when a suspect failed to come to court for eight weeks, he was not subject to centrally organized pursuit and arrest, but to the more negative expedient of being placed 'outside the king's protection'.[423] Thus the judgement of T. M. Charles-Edwards, that the Frankish laws were "not so much a part of a bureaucratic state as a partial written expression of the way in which legal tradition is handed on", seems apt.[424] The lack of centrally controlled bureaucratic enforcement methods certainly diminishes the laws as a source for legal history in the conventional sense, but it does no harm to their value as a source for social and cultural history. In fact the opposite may be true. To the extent that the law-codes represented efforts to practically and ideologically buttress the position of the barbarian kings,[425] and bearing in mind the evident absence of bureaucratic enforcement mechanisms, we should reasonably expect the laws to have merely reiterated pre-existing norms as perceived by the legislators, where those perceived norms did not directly impinge upon the interests of the law-giver. Otherwise both laws and law-makers would risk becoming redundant and exciting opposition and hostility. The repeated renewal of the laws by Frankish kings over centuries implies that this was not the case. In short, Frankish law-givers, without the means to effectively impose legislation upon the public, would have had every reason to reflect pre-existing social conventions as faithfully as possible if the law were intended to cement their position.

The choice of Latin for the recording of the laws also seems like a much less forceful argument against their utility than it was when the barbarians were thought of as culturally independent masses who replaced the native Roman population wholesale.[426] Since (as we saw in the previous chapter) the barbarian kingdoms – and possibly the Frankish ones in particular – were formed to some extent from the Latin-speaking inhabitants of the northern frontiers, including

423 "extra sermonem suum" - *Pactus* LVI, 5-6
424 Charles-Edwards (2001), p. 284; cf. Wormald (1977), p. 8
425 Which the very high tariffs attached to attacks on those "in the kings trust" strongly imply was the case, despite lack of direct statements of royal involvement. E.g. *Pactus*, XLI.5. See Wormald (1977), p. 4-8
426 Wormald (1977), p. 13

former soldiers of the late-Roman armies,[427] it would seem a most rational expedient to compose the written laws in the native language of the newer, and possibly numerically dominant, Latin-speaking constituency. It would also facilitate the comprehension of the laws, in subsequent generations, in newly conquered areas like Aquitaine where Frankish settlement had been minimal, but where Salic law had certainly gained traction in secular contexts by the Carolingian period. The Malberg glosses, which provided Frankish equivalents of many of the Latin definitions provided in the laws, indicate the availability of a non-Latin terminology which was self-consciously integrated and subordinated to Latin. By writing the Frankish customs in Latin, its authors were bridging the gap between an oral culture and a more literate society. Not only could less experienced members of the *gens* be familiarized with its 'ancient' customs, but those customs could also be made available to those Gallo-Romans who had not adopted Frankish identity, but might yet do so.

In other words, rather than seeing the choice of Latin as evidence of their impracticality for use by an established and decidedly non-Roman elite, we might view it instead as evidence of their relevance to an elite that was coming into existence in a predominantly Latinate social context. Laws in the Frankish language might have been suitable to a closed and permanent ethnic group, but they would have been counter-productively exclusive for a group constantly expanding through the addition of new members for whom the *lingua franca* was, in fact, Latin. And the Latin of *Lex Salica* actually shows more signs of adaptation to local provincial usage than the other barbarian codes, preferring a number of vulgar dialect terms and Germanic loan-words that were regionally specific to Gaul, to their more conventional and respectable alternatives.[428] Thus, far from being an inept and impractical imitation of Roman legislative tradition,

427 Though there are considerable differences in views on how large a proportion they comprised - Wormald (2003), p. 31-32; Heather, P. J. "Ethnicity, group identity, and social status in the migration period", in Garipzanof, I. H., Geary, P. & Urbanczyk, P. (eds.), *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: identities and state formation in early medieval Europe* (Turnhout 2008); Halsall, G. "Social identities and social relationships in Merovingian Gaul", in I. Wood (ed.) *Franks and Alamanni* (1998), p. 151

428 Probable vulgar Gallic variants include *spicarium* for 'granary' (*Pactus* XVI.3); *sutis* for 'pigsty' (*Pactus* II.3 & 16.4); and the Germianic loan-words, *wargus* for outlaw (*Pactus* LV.4); and *skreunia* for 'hut' (*Pactus* XXVII.29) – see Adams, J. N. *The regional diversification of Latin*, 200 BC – 600 AD, (Cambridge 2007), p. 313-320

the laws may constitute a uniquely valuable window into the developing traditions of a 'people' coalescing in the frontier society of northern Gaul.

Although clearly composed under the influence of Latin culture, and possibly influenced by Roman models in terms of structure, the provisions of *Lex Salica* show many signs of originality and independence from Roman precedent. Nowhere is the originality of the Frankish laws clearer than in their provisions on violence. In this respect, the Frankish and other barbarian codes are unique among pre-modern legislation in the detail and sophistication of their categorizations. The laws classify a wide array of injuries and acts of physical abuse, ranging from punches to coordinated attacks on country estates, ascribing monetary values to each one so as to construct a hierarchy of severity which is measurable in numerical terms. These provisions are not derived from Roman precedents, which suggests *prima facie* that they were meaningfully related to existing and vital – though not necessarily longstanding – customary practice.[429] It is important to emphasise that it is the vitality, rather than the antiquity of the laws, which is being asserted here. Notwithstanding the vague parallels with some of Tacitus' reflections on the customs of the northern tribes, the Salian laws may have much more to tell us about contemporary conditions than ancient Germanic origins.[430]

There is a small amount of additional support for the practicality of the laws on violence, from an entirely different perspective, in a study of 304 skulls from 6th-8th century Alamannia, which display a high rate of traumatic injury.[431] A few hundred skulls is obviously far too few to draw any firm comparative conclusions, and there are risks in interpreting such evidence, but it is nonetheless a larger and more reliable sample than those provided by the

429 Drew (1991), p. 30; cf. Wormald (2003), p. 23

430 cf. Kulikowski, M. "Nation versus army: a necessary contrast?", in Gillette, A. (ed.) *On Barbarian identity*, (2002), p. 71-80

431 Weber. J & Czarnetzki, A. "Neurotraumatological Aspects of Head Injuries Resulting From Sharp and Blunt Force in the Early Medieval Period of Southwestern Germany", in *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 114 (4) (2001), p. 352-356; cf. Timmins, S., Sereville-Niel, C. and Brickley, M. "Childhood cranial trauma from a late Roman and Merovingian context from Michelet, Lisieux, France", in *International Journal of Ostoarcheaology* 27 (2017), p. 717-718

narrative sources.[432] The sample features thirty three 'sharp-force' traumas, which are good candidates for the results of blows with edged weapons.[433] Compared to the evidence provided by this sample of early medieval skulls, the provisions on head injuries found in the law codes appear to be rooted in the physical reality of attacks in the period. The legal assumption implicit in the law codes that severe skull damage would not normally lead to death, even if the brain was exposed, might strike the modern reader as far-fetched, but matches the preponderance of survivors among victims of a single sharp force trauma.[434] And while the identification of "three bones" in the skull by the Salian law may seem anatomically naive,[435] in the Alamannic sample 94% of all injuries to the skull affect just three bones, the frontal, and the two parietal, neatly matching the assumptions of the *Pactus*.[436] In these respects the provisions of the laws appear to reflect the actual conditions of contemporary physical violence, attesting their grounding in realistic and relevant knowledge.

Thus there would seem to be sufficient cause to take a serious interest in the Salian laws as evidence for violence and its evaluation in the Frankish kingdoms. Even if they do not provide certain evidence of judicial practice, they do offer a uniquely detailed and systematic contemporary construction of violence in principle, and are possibly the only documents to do so from a genuinely Frankish perspective. For the Frankish laws in particular, we are also fortunate to be provided with the relatively plentiful accounts of civil dispute and violence offered by Gregory of Tours, allowing us to consider the laws in light of the

432 A discussion of the difficulties of inferring traumatic injury from skeletal remains can be found in Friedl, L. "Confounding factors in determining fracture frequencies in skeletal populations", in *AntropoWebzin* 2 (2011). For a general consideration of some difficulties of combining documentary and archaeological evidence, from an archaeological perspective, see Johnson, M. H. "Rethinking historical archaeology", in P. P. A. Funari et al (eds.), *Historical Archaeology: Back from the Edge* (New York 1999), p. 29-33

433 See Boylston, A. "Evidence for weapon-related trauma in British archaeological samples", in Cox, M & Mays, S. (eds.), *Human Osteology in Archaeology and Forensic Science* (London 2000), p. 361-2. Injury caused by the edge of a stone, horse's hoof, or even a ploughshare, for instance, would ordinarily be classed as blunt-force trauma.

434 Of twenty-one cases of sharp force trauma in the sample, only eight were fatal (no evidence of healing), and six of those showed signs of multiple trauma rather than a single blow. Thus, only two of thirteen instances of single sharp force trauma to the head (15.4%) apparently resulted in death. Missing fragments of skull in healed injuries are quite common in the sample - Ibid, p. 353-4; *Pactus* XVII.3-5; cf. *Edictum Rothari* 47, which goes so far as to distinguish between the size of the missing skull fragments.

435 *Pactus* XVII.5. The cranium actually contains eight separate bones.

436 Weber and Czarnetski (2001), p. 352 (Table 1)

"snapshots of Frankish law in action" contained in his narrative.[437] In the most literal terms, the laws constitute a still under-investigated value system, by which acts of violence and other offences can be compared in great detail, in relation to each-other, to narrative evidence and to other near-contemporary law-codes. Furthermore there is no need to suggest that this unique social configuration was the inheritance of a semi-mythical Tacitean past: the laws, and the society they inhered to, were not the product of the savage primordial German forests, but nor were they a mere descendant and pale shadow of late-Roman precedents; they were rather, to use Wallace-Hadrill's phrase, "a sociological experiment instructive in itself".[438] It should be emphasised that *Lex Salica* is being treated here not as a complete or exact embodiment of the customary justice of the fifth-sixth century Franks, but rather as an illustration of the logic of that system and its valuations of violent acts relative to other offences, and to each-other. Our previous discussion of the causes of violence has brought to light the possibility that the way in which social violence was constructed in the codes may have been an important factor in the military competence and enthusiasm of the Franks, as well as a partial consequence of their frequent military involvements. We will now analyse this system as described in the *Pactus*, and its implications for the social construction of violence, in greater detail.

4.2 – The Economics of Violence in *Lex Salica*

The barbarian law codes present numerical valuations of a broad and diverse array of violent actions, both relative to one-another and to a range of non-violent activities, in terms of gold *solidi* and silver *denarii*. They more closely resemble the tort law than the criminal law of the present day, in that almost any offence, no matter how severe, can apparently be redeemed with a certain quantity of money.[439] In this the *Pactus* goes much further than the neighbouring

437 Wood, "Jural relations" (1998), p. 214. The reliability and value of Gregory as a source is discussed at length in the next chapter.

438 Wallace-Hadrill, J. M. "The Bloodfeud of the Franks", in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 41:2 (1959), p. 459

439 The value of *solidus* is impossible to determine with precision, but some clues are available. A course of medical treatment for a serious debilitating injury is valued in the *Pactus* at 9s (XVII.7; XXIX.18), while slaves are generally valued at 25s, with some commanding a lower price of 15s (X.6). The much later *Lex Ribuaria* (XL.11-12) gives values of 1s for a

Burgundian and Visigothic codes, each of which punishes a range of the most severe offences with dispossession and death.[440] Indeed, the *Pactus* contains no explicit reference to the violent punishment of freemen at all, but merely states that in each case the offender will be liable to pay such-and-such in compensation. Personal retaliation is not mentioned, either as a demanded or prohibited action.

Thus it might seem that the provisions of the *Pactus* offer no parallels to Gregory of Tours' tales of violent dispute.[441] Some historians have therefore been inclined to believe that Frankish custom thus automatically made settlement the first legal option, prior to any attempt to take revenge.[442] Much has been made likewise of a reference in Gregory of Tours' hagiography to a man punished by the count for seeking revenge without the judgement of the court. This, however, is an isolated instance which is not necessarily indicative of ordinary practice.[443] The shadow of the Roman legal system, as well as later Carolingian developments, not to mention modern legal thinking, hangs over the field of historical assumptions.[444] But the laws nowhere state the automatic requirement to use the courts, or prescribe punishments for seeking justice through 'self-help'.[445] Only in the later prologue is peace offered as an aspiration, and later

cow; between 3s and 12s for a hawk; 2s for a spear and shield; 6s for a helmet or leg guards; 7s for a sword and scabbard; and 12s for a mail shirt (*brunia*) - How reflective this is of the situation of three centuries earlier is open to question. See Wood (1998), p. 218-221. In a more contemporary, but very politically and economically different context, a land transaction in 6th-century Italy priced arable land at 5.5s for each *iugerum*, meaning that a farm large enough to sustain a family would cost at least 70s – Jones (1964), p. 821-2; Kehoe, D. P. *The Economics of Agriculture in the Imperial Estates in North Africa* (Gottingen 1988), p. 15-16.

440 *Lex Gundobada*, II.1, 3, 4; XXXV.2; XXXIX.1

441 A view taken by, for instance, Patricia Skinner – *Living with disfigurement in early medieval Europe* (New York 2016), p. 69

442 Wallace-Hadrill (1959); Wood (1998), p. 218

443 Sarti 2013, p. 210 (n. 278); Halsall, G. "Reflections on Early Medieval violence: the example of the 'blood-feud'", in *Memoria y Civilisacion* 2:1 (1999). The claim is further complicated by the fact that the incident in question is set in Lyons, where Burgundian, rather than Frankish, custom may have applied; neither is it made clear whether the antagonists were Franks or Burgundians – Gregory of Tours, *Lives of the Fathers*, VIII.7 [Greg.Patr. 8.7 (*MGH SRM* 1.2)]. For overt reference to Burgundians being judged according to their own customs at Lyons, see *VP* VIII.9

444 Charles-Edwards (2001), p. 260; cf. Lambert (2012), p. 10-11

445 Contrast the Visiothic *Forum Iudicum*, VI.4.3 - "...he who suffered from his violence, or endured insult… shall be entitled to recover such a sum as he may estimate will compensate him for the injuries he has sustained. We forbid, however, retaliation to be made for a blow with the fist or with the foot, or for any stroke upon the head; lest, when the retaliation is inflicted, a greater or more dangerous injury may result."

additions imply, in keeping with the evidence of Anglo-Saxon laws, that the concept of 'peace' here is associated more with the absence of theft than violence.[446] Certainly there is nothing comparable to the explicit logic laid out in the Visigothic laws: "from legislation the strengthening of behaviour; from the strengthening of behaviour, harmony among the citizens; and from harmony among the citizens, victory over enemies."[447] If we pay attention to the implicit logic of the Salian laws, rather than their explicit language, a different and decidedly less irenic picture emerges.

The laws show a clear preference for monetary compensation in respect of offences committed, and envisage its payment, at times, in some detail. One measure makes extensive arrangements, including a ceremony whose eccentricity makes it look like a traditional custom.[448] Yet while the overt statements of the laws do not encourage private revenge, their internal logic implicitly makes it a legally neutral exercise. The *Pactus* seeks to provide for the settlement of grievances through payments, thus offering an alternative to violent revenge. But in ascribing numerical values to every offence, it also establishes 'laws of equivalence' between offences, thus providing an implied sanction for the settlement of one set of grievances through the retaliatory enaction of another. If a life and limb have a monetary value, then killings can be 'lent' and 'redeemed', as Bourdieu put it.[449] But the internal logic of the *Pactus* in particular goes considerably further than this in conceptual terms: non-deadly, and indeed non-violent offences could also be exchanged in a legally neutral way. If somebody steals my dog, and then I steal one of theirs, there really is not any case to be brought before the court, since the two offences balance each-other out on the theoretical ledger.[450] I owe him fifteen *solidi* and he owes me fifteen *solidi*, ergo nobody owes anybody anything. On the same basis, we might

446 Lambert (2012), p. 15-16; Lex Salica, Cap. II ("Pactus pro tenore pacis")

447 Garcia Moreno, L. A. "Legitimate and illegitimate violence in Visigothic law", in Halsall (ed.) 1998, p. 46-7

448 *Pactus* LVIII.1-6. The ceremony (3) requires a man who cannot afford a *wergeld* to gather dust from the four corners of his (presumably empty) house and throw it over his shoulder onto a relative.

449 Bourdieu, P. *The logic of practice*, (1990), p.122. For a stimulating discussion on this theme, which ranges from Hittite laws to the modern world, see Miller, W. I. *An Eye for an Eye* (Cambridge 2006), p. 31-45

450 Notwithstanding the potentially differing values of the dogs in question – *Pactus* VI.2

exchange verbal insults, punches, or more serious physical attacks. Neither party would have any incentive to make the matter official, since neither party would stand to gain, and both would be required to sacrifice their time and to possibly pay for the *rachimburgi*s' service.[451]

Significantly in the *Pactus* in particular, non-violent offences were consistently ascribed the same value as violent ones. Adultery or marrying the wife of a living man, for instance, creates a debt of two hundred *solidi*, neatly matching the price of a homicide.[452] Entering a man's house without permission was priced at thirty *solidi*, the same tariff attached to a stabbing or a serious head injury.[453] And various petty insults carry the same tariff as a blow to the head with a stick or a closed fist, at three *solidi*.[454] This constructed a potentially stable mechanism by which acts of violence might legitimately be measured against non-violent provocations, and victims freed to take the law into their own hands without fear of judicial censure. While the provisions of the *Pactus* never explicitly or formally affirmed the right to violent self-help, the internal logic of measuring all offences according to the same basic monetary standard informally legitimated and even systematically encouraged it.

A clue to the principle of self-help implicit in the Salic law in particular may be found in the provision on binding freemen and Romans with ropes, which uniquely adds the sub-clause "sine causa",[455] implying that a man could bind

451 There are a few passages in the *Pactus* that refer to a *fredus*, or fine to be paid to royal officials rather than the victim, but it comes up so seldom, and under such specific circumstances, that it cannot be assumed to have been conventional when the laws were composed (for instance, *Pactus*, L.1-4) – see Brown (2011), p. 52-3. A further interesting reference appears in Gregory of Tours' *Miracles of St Martin*, IV.26, where it is implied that the *fredus* may have been a payment in respect of the costs of royal or comital involvement in a case. In the Carolingian era *fredus* appears to have become a conventional facet of legal procedure, moving judicial practice toward what could be regarded as criminal law, but it still only amounted to a tenth of the composition - Esders, S. "Wergild and social practice in the Early Middle Ages: A 9th-century Reichenau fragment and its context", in *Entre texte et histoire: Études d'histoire médiévale offertes au professeur Shoichi Sato*, (Paris 2015), p. 118-121

452 *Pactus* XV. In fact the tariff for killing is superfluously repeated in the section covering adultery, further implying the perceived validity of the equation. Compare the Visigothic Code, III.5.4, which makes the permission of killing over adultery explicit.

453 *Pactus* XVII.5-6; XXVII.35

454 *Pactus* XVII.8, 10; XXX.2, 4-6. See below.

455 *Pactus* XXXII.1-4. We may observe that this was the method by which duke Dragolen intended to capture Guntram Boso on behalf of his king Guntram, and by which the *pueri* of Fredegund attempted to secure Leudast, in Gregory of Tours' narrative – *Histories* VI.32, V.29

another without paying compensation if he had cause to do so. Many active warriors would have been practised in such violent subjugation, given the tendency of armies to take slaves, "bound with a rope around the neck like dogs".[456] Surely it is not coincidence that the *Pactus* adds "sine causa" to its prohibition on the binding of others: a victim of wrongdoing became, by that token, a potential enforcer of customary justice against the offender; clearly the 'arrest' itself could not be counted as a retaliatory act. Importantly, there is no attempt in the law to address the question of when said *causa* should be established, implying that there was nothing beyond the loss of monetary composition to induce a vigilante to seek the approval of a court before embarking on his adventure, provided that he was confident of the right of his cause. In fact this last point may be vital in understanding the general implications of the Salic law on their own terms rather than according to modern or Roman legal principle. For whilst there was a definite restriction on personal revenge once the *mallus* had been convened,[457] there was scant suggestion that it must, or even should, be convened in the first place.[458] And the procedure for summoning an offender to court, which required the victim to visit their house with a group of freemen, actually served to set up a physical confrontation between victim and offender that might become the occasion for violent retaliation, whether planned or spontaneous.[459]

Indeed, there are signs in the Salic Laws that violent revenge was implicitly permitted by the facility it provided for 'balancing' one offence against another. Several recensions of the Laws contain a clause forbidding the removal of a head placed on a spike by the victim's enemies.[460] The interest of this law is that it appears to consider such brutal treatment of a freeman as a legitimate action

456 Gregory the Great (*Letters*, 5.36) referring to Lombard captives being taken to Gaul. (Cited in Lee 2009, p. 138-9). The basic principle was presumably the same everywhere.

457 Wood (1998), p. 218, citing *Pactus* LXXX, LXXXIX.

458 A formula of Marculf (I.29) tends to confirm this notion: a letter from the king demands that a man who had violently robbed another subject on the road "without cause" pay him compensation – Rio, A. *The Formularies of Angers and Marculf: Two Merovingian Legal handbooks* (Liverpool 2008). Contrast the more Roman-style Visigothic *Liber Iudicum* – Garcia-Moreno (1998), p. 46-7; *Visigothic Code*, II.1.13. The capitulary of Childebert and Chlothar apparently attempts to modify this principle, but does nothing to curtail retaliation, only demanding that compositions be paid in the presence of a judge – Cap II, LXXX

459 *Pactus* I.3 - "He who summons a man should go with witnesses to that man's house..."

460 "...quem inimici sui desederunt..." - *Pactus* XLI.11b

rather than a heinous crime, with punishment meted out to the person who moves the decapitated head, rather than the one who left it there in the first place. And its implication is that private revenge – in this case presumably a killing for a killing – was possible within the law.[461] Another clause in one recension, highlighted by Warren Brown in his recent discussion of violence in the Salian law, puts the same prohibition on the removal of a freeman found at a crossroads without hands or feet,[462] an attack from which death might be expected to result anyway, although this is not assumed. Nowhere else in the code is such a punishment prescribed for any offence, leading Brown to conclude that "there was a world of legitimate violence in the society depicted by the *Pactus* beyond that addressed directly by the *Pactus* itself."[463] If, however, we see the laws as constituting a kind of balance sheet by which offences may be 'resolved' by retaliatory acts of violence, a clear logic emerges which may serve to illustrate how such a scenario could come about.

The concept of offences providing 'credit' that might be resolved by future acts of violence may help to illuminate this mystery. According to a maximal reading of the compositions for amputations and killing, the removal of two hands and two feet, plus the death of the victim, would add up to six hundred solidi (100s per limb plus 200s *wergeld*).[464] Six hundred solidi was also the composition attached to a range of what were apparently considered the most severe offences – concealed murder, or the killing of a free boy, a woman of childbearing age or of anyone *in truste dominica*. Indeed the last of these provisions appears in the same chapter of the *Pactus* as the reference to freemen without hands and feet, and in some versions of the *Lex Salica* so does that on killing free women.[465] In fact the 600 solidi composition is very prominent in the *Pactus,* appearing nearly as often as *wergeld/leodi,* and connoting its own special

461 A further measure sets a tariff of 100s on unjustly accusing a freeman of a crime for which he is subsequently killed – *Pactus* XLI.14

462 Brown (2011), p. 56-7; *Pactus* XLI.11a

463 Further evidence for violent punishments which were customary but are not mentioned in the *Pactus* appears in Gregory of Tours' *Glory of the Martyrs*, LXVIII-LXIX, where he details two cases in which women miraculously survive sentences of death by drowning after being accused of adultery.

464 *Pactus*, XXIX.1, XLI.1

465 *Pactus*, XLI.5, and note 38 in Drew (1991). Also, killing a freeman in his own home is valued at 600s (XLII.1)

term – *matteleodi* – giving the impression of a distinct concept rather than a simple multiple of the traditional life-price.[466] In conceptual terms this might be compared with the late medieval English practice of hanging, drawing and quartering, or the elaborate executions of the French *Ancien Regime*, discussed in the opening chapter of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*[467] – the gravest offences seemed to merit a 'triple death', so to speak. Yet in contrast to those early modern examples, which were unequivocal signs of governmental supremacy, in this case the law implies a certain democratization of the right to carry out such dramatic and horrific reprisals.

While Gregory of Tours' *Histories* do not provide anything like what we might call complete or solid evidence for the operation of Frankish custom along these lines, the few examples that it does offer seem to bear out the implicit, retaliatory logic of the laws, rather than their bland economic language. Most obviously, and already noted in the work of J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, in several instances killing is seen to answer killing between respectable individuals, even "under the very nose of the king" and other authorities.[468] Two incidents, although not related in much detail, also provide circumstantial support for the idea that a killing could legitimately answer adultery, the tariff for which was also set at two hundred solidi. In one instance, the count Eulalius kills his nephew, apparently an independent freeman, for seeking to run off with his wife and marry her, but there is no sign in the subsequent litigation of his being punished for what appears to be an unauthorised and none-too-formal act of revenge.[469] Elsewhere in Gregory's narrative a similar fate is meted out, on the spot, to an abbot caught in bed with the wife of another freeman.[470] In each case, the logic of the laws implies that the killers would be free of all liability. What would a court have to add? The adulterer had taken out two hundred *solidi* of 'credit', and his killer was merely claiming, so to speak, what he was owed. Since in both cases the

466 The 200s penalty appears 22 times, compared with 19 appearances for the 600s. Warren Brown is of the view that *matteleodi* translates as "great man-price" - Brown (2011), p. 50-51

467 Foucault, M. (trans A. Sheridan), *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison* (New York 1995 [1978]), p. 3-12

468 Wallace-Hadrill (1959), p. 475-6; cf. Wormald (2003), p. 30

469 *Histories* X.8-9

470 *Histories* VIII.19

facts were apparently manifest, there was no need to establish proof through the courts, freeing the offended party to settle the balance without further ado. This kind of incident should encourage us to suspect that the laws – which nowhere set tariffs for acting without first appealing to the court – are neither referring to nor constructing a system in which litigation necessarily precedes punishment.

There are also distinct signs of the logic of 'triple death' in action in the *Histories*, albeit almost entirely in relation to the royal politics for which Gregory of Tours shows so much concern. One of the sons of Guntram Boso's father in law, Severus, suffers amputation of hands and feet under charges of *maiestatis lesi*,[471] a crime which does not appear in the Salian law but which Gregory implies is more serious than murder.[472] A short time earlier the killer of Chilperic's rebellious son Merovech – a man presumably considered, at the very least, *in truste dominica* – suffers another quadruple amputation, in addition to facial mutilation and torture.[473] Some would-be assassins of Childebert have their hands, ears and noses removed prior to death.[474] There is one example further down the social spectrum: in one of the very few accounts of violence toward slaves contained in the *Histories*, Sichar's *pueri* cut off the hands and feet of the slave who had seriously wounded their lord, before his summary execution.[475] None of these incidents fit precisely with the mathematical logic of the Salian law, but all fall within the broad principle that the most serious offences provided so much 'credit' to the avenger that a quick death fell well short of an appropriate response.[476] Thus Gregory's narrative evidence provides support for the vision offered by the internal logic of the laws, that offences were potentially deemed to constitute a kind of credit, which could be redeemed either through composition, or by violent retaliation.

471 *Histories*, V.25
472 *Histories*, V.27
473 *Histories*, V.18
474 *Histories*, VIII.29
475 *Histories*, VII.47
476 *Histories*, V.5 is another possible case – "...parentes...extractis gladiis, eum in frustra concidunt membratimque dispergunt."

4.3 – Non-lethal Acts of Violence and their Equivalents

The 'high peaks and low valleys' of Gregory's narrative inevitably only offer us relatively detailed accounts of such spectacular violence as would probably have occurred on the rarest of occasions.[477] Our previous discussion of the physiological and psychological dimensions of violence implies that violent subcultures are sustained through more frequent and less spectacular acts of non-lethal violence, the type of which were less interesting to Gregory of Tours. Thus there may be more interest, from the perspective of a psychological investigation of the warrior subculture, in the information provided by the *Pactus* on how the logic of this value system was supposed to play out, if at all, beneath the level of the carnage that preoccupies the narrative evidence. What the *Pactus* illustrates and constructs is the formal extension of the economic logic of revenge to the scale of minor disputes and assaults, in a way not paralleled in the near-contemporary Visigothic and Burgundian codes.[478]

The Visigothic code, while containing the same implicit equivalence of violent acts, and even making it more overt than the *Pactus*, explicitly forbids retaliation in cases of petty violence, "lest...a greater and more dangerous injury may result".[479] It also insists on both compensation for the victim and punishment by the state for attacks, bringing them closer to what might be defined as crimes in the modern sense.[480] The Burgundian *Book of Constitutions* adds fines payable to the Royal fisc to the ordinary compositions for minor assaults, similarly bringing them closer to a more modern definition of crime; they even impose a fine on the mere drawing of swords.[481] The Burgundian laws also set composition tariffs for most thefts at a multiple of the property stolen, rather than making them the same as those for assaults. Thus in most instances there can be no neat monetary equation in contemporary law codes between a non-deadly offence and a revenge attack. The *Pactus*, on the other hand, constructs many more stable relationships,

477 Goffart, W. *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon*, (Princeton 1988), p. 174. This point, and Goffart's wider critique of Gregory, is discussed at length in the next chapter.
478 Garcia Moreno, L. A. "Legitimate and illegitimate violence in Visigothic law", in Halsall (1998), p. 47-8
479 See above, n. 44
480 See Lambert discussion of the use of this kind of terminology - Lambert (2012), p. 7-8
481 *Lex.Burg.* XXXVII

with a large number of non-violent offences being placed into a small group of numerical categories, each of which is associated with a certain range of violent acts. These stand predominantly at seven key values: 100, 62.5, 45, 35, 30, 15, and 3 *solidi*.[482] In fact the range of compensations attached to offences is, for the most part, rigidly adherent to this schema. Of the over three hundred listed measures that command compensation amounts short of a full *wergeld*, less than thirty do not fall into one of these value categories. And of these exceptions, nearly half are either multiples of one of the seven key values,[483] additions of one key value to another,[484] or can be attributed to scribal error.[485]

Each of these key values is attached to specific acts of violence, as well as a cluster of non-violent offences, in a way that seems to rank them according to perceived severity. Aggravating factors can promote an offence by one, two or even three grades, depending on the nature of the aggravation.[486] There are, however, clear limits to the degree to which an offence can be aggravated, and a saliency of many of the chapters on non-violent offences – thefts in particular – is that no amount of aggravation can escalate the composition beyond 62.5 *solidi.* That is, to the point where it could provide a pretext for the killing of a Roman or a half-free person – whose lives commanded a 'semi'-*wergeld* of one hundred *solidi*[487] – or the most serious mutilations of freemen. The principle is so strong that the laws call an unnatural halt to the progression of penalties attached to large-scale animal rustling at 62.5s, where is it implicitly clear that further aggravation is possible.[488] Later capitulary additions, which demand the death of

482 See Appendix – Graph 1.

483 For instance, *Pactus* III.11 (theft of a royal bull) doubles the 45s compensation attached to ordinary bulls (III.8). See also, XXV.5; XL.4; XLI.8; XLII.3; LXIIII.1-2

484 *Pactus* XXIV.5, XXXV.9

485 *Pactus* XXIX.4, where manuscripts A1 and A2 demand 50s in respect of an amputated thumb or toe, but other manuscripts set the price at 45s. Of the remaining examples, most occur in relation to the theft of pigs (*Pactus* II), of which there were apparently too many gradations at low values to be accommodated by the 3s/15s/30s scale.

486 For instance, *Pactus* XX, XXI. See below.

487 Called *walaleodi* in the Malberg Glosses – *Pactus* XLI.9

488 Thus, in *Pactus* II, if up to 25 pigs are stolen, the compensation is 35s 'if some remain', but 62.5s if none remain. The chapter goes on to set the compensation for the theft of up to 50 pigs, if some remain, at 62.5s, but the penalty if none remain, or if more than 50 are taken (which logically would represents an increased degree of aggravation) is never given. The same reservations are also evident in relation to cattle (*Pactus* III). The chapter on horse-theft demands 62.5s for the theft of a stallion with less than seven mares, then gives the exact same penalty for the theft of more than seven mares – XXXVIII.5-6

thieves, therefore represent an extraordinary volt-face from this implicit principle that a theft, no matter how severe, can ever (fully) justify a killing. Such measures may represent a backlash by an increasingly economically stratified elite against customs that were imposing unwelcome constraints on their ability to punish violations of their property.[489]

Some other crimes of the most dishonourable sort also command the one-hundred *solidi* tariff: robbing a body that is prepared for burial, or a sleeping man; killing an infant, newborn or in the womb; or throwing a freeman down a well, if he escapes alive.[490] And these are matched to what must have been regarded as the worst sorts of mutilation: cutting off the hand or the tongue, or castration.[491] As we have seen, the laws set the *wergeld* of a Roman or *letus* at one hundred *solidi*, putting their lives on par with the most serious injuries to a freeman. The laws make clear that *leti*, like slaves, but apparently unlike *Romani*, were ordinarily expected to be in the service of freemen, meaning that their *wergelds* would be owed to their free lords.[492] Thus the *leti* were regarded by the laws, in a sense, as the limbs of their master.

Sixty-two and a half *solidi* is, as we have seen, the tariff attached to the most serious thefts. These are generally the sort of offences that could not be done without help: rustling large groups of animals, abducting free women, robbing free men on the road, or major acts of arson.[493] In short, offences priced at 62.5s are in many cases non-lethal acts associated with a *contubernium*. As some of these acts imply, the incipient risk of death, which is not ultimately realized, is an evident theme in this category. Such acts as attempted murder, attempted poisoning (by potion or with an arrow), unjustly accusing a man before the king, or accusations of sorcery, all of which could potentially result in the death of

489 *Pactus*, Cap II; LXXX. A further capitulary similarly punishes the harbouring of stolen property - LXXXV

490 *Pactus* XIV.9, 11; XXIV.6; XLI.12-13.

491 *Pactus* XXIX.1, 3, 15, 17, 18. Cutting off the entire penis in addition to castration was deemed worthy of a 200s tariff, making it the only mutilation assigned a full *wergeld*. For evidence that this distinction was meaningful to Gregory of Tours, see *Histories* VIII.39 - "...omnia pudenda cum ipsis ventris pellibus incidit."

492 Thus, if a *letus* kills a freeman, the laws state that his lord must pay one hundred *solidi* in addition to handing him over to the *parentes* of the victim, while another measure forbids the freeing of the *letus* of another *Pactus* XXXV.8; XXVI.1

493 *Pactus* II.18, 20; III.12, 14; IV.5; XIII.4-6, 12; XIV.1-2, 6, 8; XV.2; XVI.1-4

victim, attract the 62.5s tariff.[494] Other offences at this level are clearly associated with the violation of honour: despoiling a dead body and withdrawing from a planned marriage are both included in this category.[495] And again, this group of offences are the equivalent of a range of severe mutilations: piercing through the hand, cutting out an eye, or amputating a foot.[496]

A particularly interesting cluster of offences are found around the forty-five solidi composition. A few of the most serious thefts attract this tariff[497], with a consistent theme emerging of the breaking of locks[498] – vital for distinguishing a deliberate theft from a potential misunderstanding. Aside from these, a cluster of offences at the 45s value illustrate a clear and idiosyncratic theme: cutting the hair of a free boy or girl; touching or cutting the breast of a free woman; blocking the road to a free woman or striking her; voluntary sex with a free woman without her family's consent; and accusing a free woman of prostitution.[499] All offences against non-combatant free people, in other words, beyond touching a free woman's arm and short of rape, along with a number of understandably infamous thefts, are subject to this one tariff. Meanwhile, on the other side of the balance sheet, so to speak, the injuries associated with the same composition seem to be of a kind most likely to come about incidentally, (i.e. loss of three fingers, or partial amputation of the foot,)[500] with one striking exception: the visually horrific removal of the nose.[501] Could it be that the laws here allude to, and encode in their provisions, a traditional customary punishment for what were considered particularly shameful, but not especially physically harmful, offences?[502] The appearance of other violent acts at the same

494 *Pactus* XVII.1, 2, 7, 11; XVIII.1; XVIIII.1-4; XXVIII.1-3

495 *Pactus* LXI.2, LXVa.1

496 There is some ambiguity over whether certain mutilations, like the amputation of a foot, is priced at 62.5s or 100s, since both tariffs appear in *Lex Salica*, but the more detailed elaboration regarding the 62.5s tariff makes these look more likely – *Pactus* XXIX.1-3, 11-12

497 Theft of a stallion or ploughing and sowing a field, for instance - *Pactus*, XXXVIII.2, XXVII.32

498 Theft of a locked-up piglet, covered boat or breaking into a locked workroom – *Pactus* II.3, XXI.4, XXVII.30

499 *Pactus*, XX.4; XXIV.2-3; XXXI.2; XV.3; XXX.3

500 *Pactus* XXIX.7; XXIX.10.

501 *Pactus*, XXIX.13

502 A Carolingian poem may be suggestive – "...when the count arrives, he orders the thieves be hanged, And that the cheeks of robbers be forever branded / That *criminals be disgracefully maimed by having their noses cut off* / This one loses a foot, and that one loses a hand." –

value suggests otherwise, but their presence may simply illustrate the difficulty of reducing a complicated customary system of violent retribution to a linear economic formula, or otherwise the ambiguity and variability of underlying custom.

By far the largest groups of offences, however, come further still down the scale. The most important threshold by far, in terms of number of references, is the value of fifteen solidi associated with beating with a stick "so that blood flows" and blows to the head with "an iron weapon", including ones that cause quite serious injuries.[503] In the *Pactus* this key value appears as a possible mathematical solution to a dizzying array of relatively mild offences, again with a certain degree of thematic consistency. For instance, the theft of a practical items like a dog, boat or plough; or insults to personal honour, such as touching the hand of a free woman, accusations of pederasty or lying, and waylaying a freeman on the road (presumably for the purposes of extortion). So many petty offences are assigned this tariff, however, that thematic coherence is ultimately impossible.[504] Interestingly, failure to pay debts, and the defiance of a summons to the *mallus*, are assigned the same tariff.[505] Thus the normality of the fifteen solidi value gives the impression, contrary to that of Gregory of Tours, but in keeping with all detailed modern evidence for violence, as well as that of our small sample of skulls,[506] that the most conventional form of violent retaliation might have been the non-lethal blood-shedding attack – a 'good beating', by contemporary standards – rather than actual killing.

The lowest, but by no means unimportant threshold of violence in the Salian law, a single blow with stick or fist not shedding blood, is assigned a

---

Geary, P. "Judicial Violence and Torture in the Carolingian Empire", in R.Karras, J. Kaye, and A. Matter, (eds.) *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008), p. 82-3, citing *Carmen de Timone Comite*, in Ernst Dummler (ed.), MGH *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini* 2 (Berlin 1884), p. 120-124, at 122, l.65-68

503 *Pactus*, XVII.3-4, 9; also, XXIX.9, 14, 16. Gregory of Tours does not seem to be unaware of the significance of this threshold of violence, but generally only notes it in the context of more sensational events. For instance at *Histories*, IV.46. This is discussed at length in Chapter 6.

504 *Pactus* IV.1-3; XXI.2; VII.13; XX.1; XXX.1, 7; XXXI.1, 3. In all the 15s tariff occurs over 80 times in *Lex Salica*, approximately four times as often as *wergeld*.

505 *Pactus* I.1; L.1-3

506 Weber & Czarnetzki (2001), p. 354-5

composition of three solidi.[507] In the *Histories*, attacks of this type are frequently associated with the punishment of disobedient social inferiors.[508] Examining the provisions of the laws, we find that a number of trivial thefts and personal insults are subject to the same tariff.[509] It does not require a great leap of the imagination to picture how such scenarios might play out without the involvement of either the *rachimburgi* or money. Indeed, for a free person of substance, taking a personal insult to the *mallus* or other arbitration rather than simply giving the offender a smack might be actively deleterious to their social position, since it would simultaneously expose their lack of retaliatory power, and require the restatement of their humiliation before a crowd of local notables. This may have been the customary logic at work in the escalation of "verborum obiectionibus" to "manibus verberarent" between the royal courtiers Secundus and Asteriolus, which presumably were played out in a public setting.[510]

Another interesting point raised by the equation of non-blood shedding blows with a range of petty offences at three solidi relates to a suggestion of Frank Siegmund on the relationship of weapon-burials to the Salian laws. He observes that juveniles are normally buried merely with arrows, rather than the seaxes, spears etc which characterise adult graves, and suggests a link between this practice and a reference in the laws to a three solidi punishment for 'those with arrows' in the *Pactus*, mentioned as the least culpable partners in the offence of abduction by multiple perpetrators.[511] The implications are that juveniles might be brought along with older men in the course of such abductions, and that their youth limited the weaponry that they were allowed to carry (at least to their graves, since both law and burial custom might have been somewhat abstract indexes of actual equipment) as well as their liability for the offence. The further implication suggested by our analysis is that a non-blood-shedding attack might be considered fair retribution for the kind of offences more associated with

507 *Pactus*, XVII.8, 10
508 For instance, *Histories* IV.46; VII.47. See Chapter 6.
509 For example *Pactus*, II.1; III.4; IV.2; XXX.2, 4-6; XXI.1
510 *Histories* III.33; see also, *Histories* VII.3
511 Siegmund, F. "Social structure and relations", in I. Wood (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge 1998), p. 179-180; citing *Pactus* XIII.3

childish misbehaviour,[512] raising the possibility of a customary relationship between age and degree of associated violence, both as perpetrator and victim.

Guy Halsall has already suggested such a relationship at the scale of warfare, deducing the existence of "a military basis of masculinity and social age", again partly on the evidence of weapon burials.[513] But the concept of age in this period, as the description of subordinate followers of elite figures as *pueri* attests,[514] was also closely associated with social status. And another prominent class of offence attracting a tariff of three solidi are crimes committed by slaves.[515] Thus the possibility arises that "those with arrows" could be unfree dependents of an elite warrior, the type of which we glimpsed in the Theodosian Code a century earlier.[516] This is not at all to deny the suggestion that the younger members of free families could also join a raiding group, for it is quite possible that both boys and slaves could have been attached to such groups as junior members.

4.4 – Violence Across Status Thresholds

Most of what has been said of the logic of the laws on violence has reflected upon its potential in respect of free people well-matched in terms of wealth, status and power. But between the free and the unfree, imbalances in legal status created massive differences in how these value systems operated, and the delicate sense of proportion in the law codes tended to break down.[517] There is a general tendency in the post-Roman codes (in line with Roman precedent) to prescribe corporal punishments to people of low status where compositions would have been demanded of free people,[518] removing composition as an

512 For instance, the theft of a piglet, calf or lamb (Pactus II.1, III.1, IV.2) various small birds (VII1-10), or the bell from a cow (XXVII.2); and the medieval equivalent of a 'joy ride', taking a boat to cross a river (XXI.1).

513 Halsall (2003), p. 39

514 For instance, *Histories* V.48, VI.32, VII.3. *Pueri* are treated at length in Chapter 6.

515 *Pactus* XII.1 & XL.12 (theft); XXV (rape of another slave). See below.

516 *Cod.Theo*. VII.13.16. See Chapter 3.

517 Rio (2008), p. 20-21, who however points out some qualifying evidence.

518 Brown (2011), p. 53 Although as our discussion has shown, this may produce an impression of difference that obscures the potential similarity of approach to offences committed by people of differing statuses. It would seem, according to our analysis of the potential interchangeability of monetary and violent 'resolutions' of offences, that subjecting the unfree to corporal punishments is simply an obvious logical step given the probable absence of personal resources by which they could satisfy the demands of legal redress.

option. And the physical violence prescribed for their offences is ordinarily far in excess of that associated with the values demanded of freemen under the same circumstances. The Burgundian code enjoins the torture of slaves accused of crimes to extract confession, a measure never prescribed for free people, although as the narrative sources attest it was occasionally used against freemen by royal command in the Frankish kingdoms.[519] The differing *wergeld*s of various classes of people also gave the logic of the *Pactus*, with respect to deadly violence in particular, a highly hierarchical bent: the killing or mutilation of a Roman by a Frank, or a lesser Burgundian or Lombard freeman by another of higher status, could not be properly 'resolved' with an identical revenge attack, because the latter had a higher *wergeld* than the former.[520] Conversely, if a half-free or lesser freeman were to kill a greater one, the laws potentially permitted retaliatory violence far in excess of the original crime. The barbarian codes thus systematically discouraged retaliatory violence against higher status individuals by their inferiors, and systematically encouraged inordinate violent retaliation against lower status individuals by their superiors.

When it came to punishment of slaves for a wide array of offences in *Lex Salica*, the range of numerical values were equated to an entirely different, more severe, scale of appropriate physical violence. As we have seen, a range of offences committed by slaves were priced at three *solidi*, and slaves may have not been held equally responsible to their masters in collective crimes. The same principle can be seen to extend to personal offences committed by the unfree. Where a freeman would pay fifteen *solidi* for a theft, a slave is required to pay just three, and where a freeman would pay thirty-five *solidi*, a slave must pay just six.[521] The willingness of the laws to take into consideration the confined resources of the slave (who is clearly expected here to have personal wealth) is admirable, but for the unfree a three-solidi tariff was not – as in the case of freemen – the equivalent of a single blow with a stick or fist. Instead the slave could be subjected to one hundred and twenty blows (one for each *denarius* owed), after the torture conventionally expected to elicit the confession. An

519 *Lex.Burg.* VII, VIII
520 Drew (1972), p. 19-20 n.4; *Ed.Roth.* 10-14, 387
521 *Pactus* XL.2, 4

offence of six solidi (the equivalent of 35s for a freeman) meant two hundred and forty blows for a female slave; for a male it meant castration. And an offence that would attract a forty-five *solidi* tariff – i.e. a grave offence to honour or an aggravated theft[522] – for a freeman justified capital punishment for a slave, who thus in a sense could be said to possess a quarter-*wergeld*.[523]

As in offences between equals, the offended freeman himself was apparently expected to enact retaliatory violence against slaves personally.[524] As we have seen, this could include mutilation and execution,[525] but usually consisted of extended beatings on a rack or post.[526] Perhaps we should interpret the Salian provision, demanding compensation of a single *tremisses* for beating a slave so severely that they could not work for forty days, [527] as potentially relating to this punishment process – a hundred blows with almost any implement could do substantial damage if the attacker was sufficiently enthusiastic. But the paucity of the sum speaks to the helplessness of the unfree in the face of elite violence. Other codes are far less dismissive of non-lethal violence committed against slaves, demanding compositions for a range of specific injuries, at a considerable fraction of that applied to the same injuries against freemen.[528] Thus the social logic of *Lex Salica* is that freemen were positively expected to respond with inordinate violence to offences, including non-violent offences, by their social inferiors. Furthermore, rather than confining the exercise of judicial violence to a few designated state officials, like the Roman *carnifex*[529] or the modern interrogator, the *Pactus* positively encouraged and affirmed such violence as a customary social practice among freemen. From the perspective of social preparation for military violence, we may view the beating of racked slaves with

522 See above, section 3

523 *Pactus* XL.1, 3, 5, 9. Elsewhere, however, the 3s required for a slave who rapes another is equated with 300 lashes (*Pactus* XXV.6). And, as we have seen, slaves are valued elsewhere as having an asset value of 25s or 35s (*Pactus* X.1). This might imply that the status of slaves was in flux during the late fifth and early sixth centuries, although which direction their status was moving in is open to question.

524 *Pactus*, XL.6 demands that the offended party provide his own sticks with which to beat the offending slave.

525 Compare *Lex.Luit.* LXIV.11; *Lex.Burg.* XXXV

526 *Pactus*, XL; *Lex.Burg*. XV

527 *Pactus*, XXXV

528 *Edictum Rothari* 76-128; *Bur.Cod.* V.2-7

529 Clark, J. “Desires of the Hangman: Augustine on Legitimized Violence”, in Drake (ed.) (2006), p. 137-8

sticks and lashes prescribed by the *Pactus* as something like a psychologically 'enhanced' version of the Roman 'exercise of the post', by which recruits were trained to strike,[530] since it would have mentally prepared the freeman for his later martial duties, particularly the abuse of rural and civic populations that so often characterized aggressive campaigning.[531]

Legal status differentiated freemen and slaves, but even among freemen of the same technical status other factors could generate similarly extreme differences in legal consequence for the same offences. The grim economic logic of *Lex Salica* dictated that the wealthy and powerful were free to perpetrate violence without fear of its consequences, since they had large entourages and could easily pay whatever compensation resulted from their violent actions.[532] The economic incentive to accept the compensation due to victims would have been similarly diluted by great wealth, for two hundred solidi would hardly replace a son for a powerful noble, or a man who already had a stash of liquid assets.[533] The Patrician Mummolus, certainly one the wealthiest non-royal individuals in the late-sixth-century kingdoms, reportedly had a hoard of wealth that included thirty talents of gold and two hundred and fifty talents of silver, which probably amounted to 200,000 *solidi*, or a thousand *wergeld*s, in gold alone.[534] Of course the logical conclusion of this line of reasoning is that the most powerful families, who were wealthier than anyone else, might be quite impossible to satisfy with standard compensations, and would therefore be proportionately more inclined to prefer violent revenge to the acceptance of composition. They would also be liberated to indulge their inclinations to violence against lesser figures, who did not have the wherewithal to retaliate, and for whom the compensation would represent a really substantial sum. Frankish royal responses to all kinds of offences by their subordinates, and the behaviour of some well-connected elite figures, would seem to support this impression,[535] although we are not offered

530 Chapter 2, at notes 109, 147-152; Vegetius, p. 14 ("The Post")
531 See Chapter 2.
532 Ausenda, in Wood 1998, p. 230-1
533 For instance, Waddo, former major-domo to princess Rigunth – HF, V.28, 38; X.21
534 *Histories* VII.40 - "Ferunt autem ducenta quinquaginta talenta argenti fuisse, auri vero amplius quam triginta." The calculation is based on the assumption that a talent weighed around 30kg or perhaps slightly less. The value of the silver talents is impossible to quantify, due to the irregular weight of silver coin at the time.
535 See Chapter 6, part 1.

sufficient detail on relative wealth lower down the social spectrum to draw firm conclusions.

* * *

Violence, as we have seen, is integral to the Salian code in particular not merely as an offence to be paid for, but also implicitly as a 'resolution' of all kinds of other offences, both violent and non-violent. The laws do not serve to prohibit violence entirely, so much as to regulate it, pointing to appropriate levels of violence in the face of a range of provocations, the overwhelming majority of which did not, however, merit deadly retaliation. This last observation has already been made but deserves emphasis given its lack of prominence to date. Despite the impression created by Gregory of Tours' sensational narrative evidence, the laws do far more to facilitate non-lethal violence by way of retribution than they do lethal violence. It has already been observed that the term 'feud' is inappropriate to the period, because the word it refers to, *faida*, is not one that defines an ongoing dialectical relationship so much as an act of violent revenge or the potential for such an act.[536] I would suggest that *Lex Salica* did little to facilitate continuous 'feud' between freemen, but much more to facilitate a kind of limited retributive justice. As importantly, in terms of the social production of competent warriors, it made violent conflict more-or-less legally neutral, provided the injuries to one side did not drastically outweigh the other. [537] In providing such limited licence for violence, however, there was always the potential that what had begun as a mere attempt to cause an *effusionem sanguinis* would accidentally or incidentally escalate into something much more serious.

Moreover, the ramifications of establishing a mathematical relationship between the licence to do violence and the wealth and power of the subject, in

536 Halsall (1998), p. 28-9; cf. Wood (2006)

537 This helps to explain why the apparently non-lethal fight between the men of Sichar and Austregisel at the outset of their 'feud' was not mentioned in the subsequent court case; and why the "maiores et primi" of Chilperic, who came to blows before the altar in Paris, were referred to Church authorities by the king – *Histories*, VII.47, V.32.

terms of the construction and maintenance of elite social identities, are worthy of emphasis. The 'conspicuous consumption' theory of Thorstein Veblen, applied by him to compare pre-industrial cultural display to the modern competitive purchase of luxury goods,[538] may be equally applicable here. If violence costs money, then violence thereby becomes a spectacularly conspicuous form of consumption, provided the consumers have a sufficiently strong grasp of who can be safely attacked without risk of composition not being accepted, which in such small local populations[539] most people undoubtedly would have done. Public violence could become an arena for the competitive display of status, whilst simultaneously asserting in an immediate and undeniable way the socio-economic hierarchy, and indeed to some extent constructing it. Thus social position was closely related to duty, licence and vulnerability in respect of violence in a wide range of contexts, with those of low status being most strictly constrained and most completely vulnerable,and those of high status being not just relatively unconstrained, but positively encouraged to assert and display their status through violence.[540] The sources imply, in other words, that the hierarchy of ethnicity, social status, and political position was, in an important conceptual respect, a hierarchy of violent prerogatives and responsibilities. These conditions would have been capable of accommodating the violent behavioural inclinations and occasional outbursts of a violently socialized elite. They would also have been most germane to the reproduction of violent socialization among this elite.

We are used to thinking of law as a system by which violence is restrained. What this analysis suggests is that such a vision of law is inappropriate to *Lex Salica* in particular. This code, contrary to modern legal principle, actually constructed a system that implicitly permitted the redress of offences through

538 Veblen, T. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, (Mineola 1994 [1899]), Ch. 4, especially p. 46 - "...The cannon of reputability [in this case the warrior culture] is at hand and seizes upon such innovations as are, according to its standard, fit to survive. Since the consumption of these more excellent goods is an evidence of wealth, it becomes honorific; and conversely, the failure to consume in due quantity and quality becomes a mark of inferiority and demerit."

539 Siegmund (1998), p. 181-3

540 Cf. Halsall (2003), p.33; see Appendix – Graph 2

violent ‘self-help’. A wide array of offences – both violent and non-violent – were thus constructed as potential *causae bellorum*. Furthermore, by constructing a value system in which violent retribution could be exchanged for non-violent offences, the *Pactus* facilitated the escalation of non-violent into violent conflict by those who elected to do so. It also gave tacit permission and social incentives for violence by the wealthy and free against poorer and less powerful social inferiors. As Chapter 1 showed, among those inured to violence by military experience or otherwise, there will be those who will readily seize such opportunities, imposing their learned inclinations to violence upon their local social milieus in the process. Thus the laws systematically provided for the social iteration of experiences of violence in the arena of low-level socio-economic conflict, in a way that went further than the Roman law or indeed the codes of the other post-Roman kingdoms. And in doing so they also systematically reproduced behavioural adaptations to violence among the warrior classes. The laws constructed a culturally limited tradition of violence by which social hierarchy and values were maintained, and military readiness – a vital aspect of those social values – continually renewed.

Chapter 5: Interpreting the Violence in Gregory of Tours' *Histories*

The *Histories* of Gregory of Tours are the most complete single account of secular events and individuals in the post-Roman West prior to the Carolingian period. For the later sixth century and especially the period c. 574-592, during which time Gregory occupied the bishopric of Tours, they offer an incomparable trove of information, not least in respect of their uniquely extensive treatment of non-ecclesiastical figures and their affairs. General and political treatments of sixth-century Francia are marked by their reliance on Gregory's work and the *Histories* in particular.[541] They have also formed a central plank of more detailed studies of various aspects of Merovingian society, ranging from religion and literacy to law and taxation, prosopography, gender, Jewish history and, of course, questions about the degree and nature of violence.[542] This latter theme preoccupies the *Histories* almost more than any other, but the study of Gregory's reports of violence has been especially complicated by Walter Goffart's highly influential *Narrators of Barbarian History*, which singled out "lurid passages from the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours" as the principle means by which the post-Roman period was characterized as one of chaos and violence by those who had taught him as an undergraduate…

---

541 For instance, the treatment of the sixth century in Geary, P. J. *Before France and Germany: The creation and transformation of the Merovingian World* (Oxford 1988), and Wood, I. *The Merovingian Kingdoms* (1994); Murray "The composition of the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours and its bearing on the political narrative", in Murray, A. C. (ed.) *A companion to Gregory of Tours* (Leiden 2015), p. 95; Sarti, L. *Perceiving war and the military in early Christian Gaul (ca. 400-700 A.D.)* (Leiden 2013), p. 76

542 Wood, I. "Administration, law and culture in Merovingian Gaul" in Noble, T. F. X. (ed.) *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (New York 2006), and "Jural relations among the Franks and the Alamanni" (1998); Goffart, W. "Frankish military duty and the fate of Roman taxation", in EME 16:2 (May 2008); Shanzer, D, Review Article on M. Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century* translated by C. Carroll (Cambridge 2001), in *Medieval Prosopography* 23 (April 2002), p. 248; Gradowicz-Pancer, N. "De-gendering female violence: Merovingian female honour as an 'exchange of violence'", in *Early Medieval Europe* 11:1 (2002), 1-18; McRobbie, J. "Gender and violence in Gregory of Tours *Decem Libri Historiarum*, PhD Thesis, University of St Andrews (2012); Dailey, E. T. *Queens, Consorts, Concubines: Gregory of Tours and Women of the Merovingian Elite* (Leiden 2015); Mezei, M. "Jewish Communities in the Merovingian towns in the second half of the sixth century as described by Gregory of Tours", in *Chronica* vol. 5 (2005), 19-29; Bachrach, B. S. *Merovingian Military Organization* (Minnesota 1972), p. 11-12; Liebeschuetz, W. "Violence in the barbarian successor kingdoms", in Drake, H. A. *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices* (Aldershot 2006); Sarti (2013)

> "At this distance, I cannot explain my negative reaction to the package placed in my hands, but I do recall being convinced that the selection was a caricature, no more representative of "The Dark Ages" than of any other epoch. It has taken me a long time to translate this hunch into a sustained argument."[543]

This final section of this thesis comprises a detailed analysis of the violence presented to us in Gregory's *Histories*, divided into two Chapters. This Chapter engages with the debate surrounding the significance and utility of Gregory's frequent references to violence, considering his political and ecclesiological position, his possible audience, and the values and agendas represented in his work. This discussion will conclude that while Gregory certainly used his material for didactic purposes, and emphasised the violence of many of his antagonists, he also demurred from describing violence in a range of contexts, and was inconsistent in his moral tone, suggesting the ambiguous and variable moral composition of Gregory's expected audience, the people he described and indeed the man himself. Overall it will be suggested that the descriptions of violence in the *Histories*, while clearly not naively portraying the ordinary tone of social life, are nonetheless highly instructive, and not as unrepresentative of contemporary society as their critics have suggested.

The next Chapter will analyse the range of violence presented in the *Histories*, and the nature of its presentation, in greater detail. The language of violence employed by Gregory of Tours and his protagonists will be closely analysed, in order to better understand the significance and connotations of key terms. And other less obvious themes, hinted at but neglected by Gregory, such as the shadowy presence of the lower orders, questions about domestic violence, and the possible role of exiles in the generation of violent conflict, will be brought into relief in the process. It will be argued that the society that emerges from the

543 Goffart (Princeton 1988), p. 9. For his influence, see for instance I. Wood, "The secret histories of Gregory of Tours", in *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 71:2 (1993), p. 253-5; Heinzelmann, M. (trans. C. Carroll) *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century* translated by C. Carroll (Cambridge University, 2001 [1994]), p. 36-7; Murray, A.C. *Gregory of Tours: The Merovingians* (2005), p. 3-7; Halsall, G. "The preface to Book V of Gregory of Tours' *Histories*: its form, context and significance", in *EHR* 122.496 (Apr 2007), p. 297-9; Dailey (2015), p. 1-3; Pohl (2006), p. 23.

Histories was one in which violence was frequent and accepted, even admired, in a wide array of contexts; that hierarchy and impunity were so intimately linked that violence could be, in and of itself, a manifestation of social status; and that some of the more extreme behaviour reported by Gregory may be comprehensible in terms of psychological (mal-)adaptation to violent circumstances.

5.1 – The Presentation of Violence in the *Histories*

The *Histories* have long been totemic among historians considering violence in the post-Roman centuries, but the consensus on their significance has undergone something of a volt-face over the course of the twentieth century. Gregory's self-presentation as an intellectually uncultivated and naively spontaneous narrator, widely accepted in the 19th century, is now equally widely derided as a deliberate misrepresentation of his literary abilities and sense of narrative mission.[544] Walter Goffart's *Narrators of Barbarian History*, which substantially extended and elaborated this conception of Gregory, remains the most important contribution to the modern consensus on the *Histories*. And, as we have seen, Goffart was in the vanguard of a new generation of historians who were dissatisfied with the traditional impression of the post-Roman period – which depended, in part, on a relatively uncritical reading of the *Histories* – as one of political, cultural and social decay, chaos, and unrestrained violence.[545]

Of course, the approach of *Narrators* to the *Histories* is far more multi-faceted and ambitious than a simple attempt to clear the Merovingian period of the perceived charge of excessive violence. The Gregory of Tours described by Goffart is neither a compulsive dissembler nor a rank fantasist – such a suggestion would fundamentally undermine our ability to reconstruct many

544 See for instance Brown, P. "Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory of Tours" (1977), p. 223; De Nie, G. *Views from a Many-Windowed Tower: Studies of Imagination in the works of Gregory of Tours*, (1987); Murray (2015), p. 70; Heinzelmann (2001); Halsall, G. "The preface to Book V of Gregory of Tours' *Histories*: its form, context and significance", in *EHR* 122.496 (Apr 2007), p. 297-8; Goffart (1988), p. 114-116

545 See Introduction. The dominance of this interpretation is illustrated in P. Brown, "Gregory of Tours", and the other essays collected in K. Mitchell and I. Wood (eds.), *The World of Gregory of Tours* (Leiden 2002)

important aspects of the period[546] – but rather a gifted and intelligent narrator with such mastery of his craft that the reader must distrust anything in the *Histories* that looks spontaneous or unguarded. Ultimately, Goffart invites us to radically reinterpret the apparently chaotic order of the *Histories'* work as a carefully designed indictment of the futility of secular ambition juxtaposed against the exemplary conduct and miracles of the righteous.[547]

Goffart's impression of the *Histories* was based on evaluating it side by side with his other works, which were primarily concerned with the miracles of the saints – "Gregory chose his miracles and their time frame, not they him, and the witness he caused them to bear to divine power, generosity, and beneficence in the here and now was, to Gregory at least, a thing of sublime beauty."[548] The violence portrayed in the *Histories* was, Goffart suggested, selected in a similar way, for purposes that complemented the presentation of sublime beauty embodied in the saints by juxtaposing them to the evil, corrupt and ultimately tragic existences of their secular counterparts. Goffart picks out the preface to Book II of the *Histories* as the vital statement of Gregory's intention to place the "*felicem beatorum vitam*" side by side with the "*miserorum memoremus excidia*" for the edification of his audience.[549] Thus, "[t]he seriousness of such history is moral and didactic. Thorough representation of political imperatives, family

546 Including Goffart's own assessment of Merovingian settlement and taxation, which inevitably partially relies on the few scattered references to tax and military obligation in the *Histories* - Goffart (2008), p. 181-186

547 Goffart (1988), p. 168-9 - "...So conceived, the *Histories* was meant to be, above all, a vehicle of Christian instruction." See below. Cf. Heinzelmann, M. *Gregory of Tours: history and society in the sixth century* (Cambridge 2001), which also takes the view that the *Histories* are carefully contrived, but focuses more on Gregory's biblical parallels. Heinzelmann's analysis, which argues that the *Histories* are "schematically subjected to Gregory's theology and methodology" (p. 127) has been considered the major rival to Goffart's impression of Gregory as a satirist (see Brown 2002, p. 1-17). He nonetheless agrees with Goffart in tending to treat the episodes of violence that pepper the *Histories* as 'vehicles for leitmotifs' rather than instructive examples of elite behaviour (Heinzelmann 2001, p. 36-7). Therefore many of the objections to Goffart's analysis presented here, which focus on the inconsistencies in Gregory's sense of narrative mission, also apply to Heinzelmann (see Wood 2002, p. 29-30). For more detailed critiques of Heinzelmann's schema, see Shanzer (2002) and Halsall, G. "Nero and Herod? The death of Chilperic and Gregory of Tours' writing of history", in Mitchell and Wood (eds.) *The World of Gregory of Tours* (2002).

548 Goffart (1988), citing Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*; *Glory of the Confessors*; *Wonders*.

549 A contrast repeated on several other occasions in the *Histories* – see Goffart (1988) p. 149, 170, 181

relationships, or other practical details is a secondary consideration."[550] Although Goffart's analysis has been disputed, the general impression of the *Histories* as a fundamentally caricatured and unreliable guide to the violence of the period has remained popular.[551] It presents a powerful challenge to the idea that the *Histories* can be used to understand contemporary violence, and will therefore form the starting point of the present analysis.

The observation that Gregory is a highly selective author is incontrovertible. Even for the years in the later 580s that he covers in the greatest detail, only a few dozen incidents are recorded, and events below the level of royal intrigues are scattered fleetingly, and often in the form of neatly self-contained vignettes, across the work. The most obvious constraint of the *Histories* is its relentlessly royal, ecclesiastical and noble focus. Gregory is not much interested in counts, still less in wealthy freemen, and not at all in poor and ordinary free, semi-free or unfree people, who are seldom mentioned as individuals and almost never named. The strata of society dealt with in the *Histories* are generally the few hundred people in the top offices of church and state, and the closest thing to a continuous narrative that unifies the later, more detailed books is the sequence of civil wars that dominated the period. Even such exalted figures as dukes are patchily covered, and generally only enter the narrative where they figure in royal politics. The geographical range of much of the *Histories* is also quite narrow. Other than a few digressions into the politics of Spain and the Empire, the focus of the later books is largely confined to Gaul, rarely straying beyond the borders of modern France.[552] Only in the vicinity of Tours itself is local

550 Ibid., p. 182

551 See Liebeschuetz (2006), p. 37-44; and the reviews of Roger Collins, in *EHR* vol.106 no.421 (Oct. 1991), p. 967, and (for a more favourable perspective) Averil Cameron in *AHR* vol.95 no.4 (1990), p. 1172-3. Sarti (2013) evidently considers Gregory reliable, but does not address Goffart's critique. Dailey's recent treatment of the *Histories* also takes a positive view of their reliability, and makes several persuasive points to this effect – Dailey (2015), p. 161-163.

552 The most northerly reports of the Frankish kingdoms come from Tournai and Koblenz, the latter of which Gregory visited in 585 (VIII.14), the most southerly from Marseilles and Toulouse.

politics treated with any frequency, and even here the reports are partial and discontinuous.[553]

Personal acquaintance is also an important and, thanks to the diffuse and discontinuous quality of the narrative, easily underestimated factor in Gregory's selection of violent characters and incidents.[554] A survey of the violent individuals who appear prominently in the *Histories* reveals that a considerable number had occasion to meet Gregory in person, most often in the context of seeking sanctuary at Saint Martin's.[555] The former count of Tours, Leudast "used to walk into the church-house in his curiass and mail shirt, with his quiver hanging round him, his spear in his hand and his helmet on his head". The duke Eberulf's son was baptized by Gregory, and he attacked St Martin's priests and threatened Gregory's life. Other characters, like count Eunomius and Pelagius are not shown meeting Gregory, but must surely have done so.[556] And many of those who did not meet Gregory – like Mummolus, Desiderius and Avius – are only divided from him by one degree of separation. The damning description of Rauching's personal behaviour could have come straight from the mouth of his killer, Childebert.[557] Indeed, the personal and political are difficult to separate, since both Gregory and most of his subjects were personally connected to the Royal family.

Equally persuasive is the suggestion that Gregory is a consummate storyteller with a penchant for the dramatic. The only episodes in the *Histories* that break momentarily from the preoccupation with royal politics tend to concern, as Goffart observes, miracles and acts of violence. Gregory is uninterested in the ordinary – good harvests, the normal business of pastoral work, the attire and daily life of the noble classes, and other mundane matters that would be invaluable to the social historian entirely escape his attention. Notwithstanding a couple of overlong digressions into some of Gregory's inconclusive theological

553 See below.
554 cf. Heinzelmann (2001), p. 90-91
555 Guntram Boso (V.4), Leudast and Riculf (V.49); Bladast (VI.31, VIII.6); Eberulf (VII.21-22); Sichar (VII.47); Childeric the Saxon (VIII.11); Clotild (IX.40)
556 *Histories* VII.23; VIII.40
557 *Histories* V.3; Mummolus and Desiderius were in league with Bladast prior to the latter seeking sanctuary at St Martin's (VII.28); Avius was killed by Childeric the Saxon (VII.3). On Rauching, see below.

debates with priests and visiting dignitaries, the work sets out consistently to shock and amaze, sticking to the high peaks and low valleys of contemporary life.[558] The most important question for our present purposes, which extends naturally from Gregory's omissions and flare for drama, is how this affects his presentation of contemporary violence. In Goffart's view, the consistent tendency is toward caricatured over-representation, designed to cast shadows against the light of saintly miracles. But detailed analysis calls this damning overall conclusion into question.

The interpretation of the *Histories'* violence as a vehicle for Christian instruction is based on an examination of the supposed moral purpose behind Gregory's omissions and inclusions.[559] Estimating and evaluating the missing material in the *Histories* is no easy task, given that they form the only source for most of the contemporary incidents of violence which they report, so much of Goffart's assessment of omission rests on the more ancient and distant events described by Gregory, but he does find a few good candidates for deliberate obfuscation. Certain events and figures deemed inconvenient or unnecessary to a moralizing Christian narrative by Goffart – like Constantius II and Valens's Arian sympathies, and that "fine example of unpunished wickedness" Geiseric – are conspicuously absent from Gregory's account. In one demonstrable case of literary distortion of contemporary events, Goffart catches Gregory sanitizing the violent conversion of the Clermont Jews at the hands of bishop Avitus's congregation.[560]

In many instances, the self-conscious framing and moral purpose of the tales of violence recounted in the *Histories* is clear: A certain Duke Amalo is killed with his own sword by a free girl during an attempt to rape her; the Abbot Dagulf, a robber and a killer, is killed by a husband who discovers him in bed with his wife; Avius, adulterer and murderer of a citizen of Tours in Book VI, is himself stabbed to death in a chance encounter a few years later in Book VII; Rauching, a duke condemned as proud and wantonly sadistic in Book V, involves himself in an abortive conspiracy against king Childebert in Book IX and is

558 Goffart (1988), p. 174
559 Ibid, p. 137-160
560 Ibid, p. 137-8, 163-4. See below.

brutally killed.[561] In each case Gregory makes overt and strident moral judgements - “In this way God in his majesty avenged the innocent blood which this man had shed with his own hand.”[562] The first two of these incidents, in which neither the locations of the events in question nor the names of the other protagonists are offered, seem like particularly good candidates for interpolations by Gregory added to the text specifically for their moral value. And as the latter two of these scenes make clear, there is a tendency in the *Histories* to divide the story arcs of its doomed characters into far-flung chapters in a way that betrays a high level of narrative craft and probable *post-hoc* re-editing. The Rauching storyline, in which Gregory overtly previews the duke’s later demise in the earlier chapter, is particularly suspect, and this is only one of several such instances.[563]

Gregory’s deployment of selection and omission for moralizing purposes is, however, inconsistent.[564] At times, the moral pretensions of Gregory’s prose are not entirely obvious, and opportunities to craft narrative links between sin and judgement are conspicuously missed. Pappolus, bishop of Langres, is bad and dies miraculously, but for the sake of modesty Gregory declines to inform the reader what he actually did wrong.[565] Bishop Marachar is poisoned by his successor, who in turn dies “by divine judgement”, but the manner of the poisoner’s deserved death is not given.[566] Nonnichius, count of Limoges, arrests bishop Charterius in possession of letters which contain abusive remarks about the king, but Charterius accuses the deacon Frontinus of fabricating them. In the end Charterius is cleared and the prime mover of the plot to destroy him, Frontinus, is forgiven; but of the count, who on the face of it was doing more than his duty, Gregory dryly remarks “Two months later Count Nonnichius, who had started all this scandal, died of a stroke. He had no children.”[567]

561 *Histories*, IX.27; VIII.19; VI.13 and VII.3; V.3 and VIII. See also, VI.32; VIII.40; X.14
562 *Histories*, VII.3
563 Murray 2015, p. 86-88
564 This basic observation is not original. For complementary arguments see Wood, I. “The individuality of Gregory of Tours”, in eds. Mitchell and Wood (2002)
565 *Histories*, V.5
566 *Histories*, V.36
567 *Histories*, VI.22

Elsewhere the moral message is obscure to the point of anonymity, with characters who have been established sympathetically meeting bad ends, and others who are clearly described as villains evading divine judgement. Duke Austrapius, after miraculously escaping the wrath of prince Chramn, is made bishop of Champtocaeux, but later dies "a cruel death from the blow of a spear" in a local uprising.[568] Duke Bladast devastates the Tours region with an army, and later joins the rebellion of Gundovald, only to be pardoned after Gregory pleads for his life.[569] The saintly abbess Ingitrude bans her daughter Berthegund from her nunnery, but upon her mother's death Berthegund seizes her property with the help of a "band of ruffians". No vengeance, human or divine, apparently makes good the misdeed.[570] Count Eulalius of Clermont beats and mistreats his wife, kills his nephew and several other men in separate incidents, and, when his wife absconds to marry the duke Desiderius, successfully sues her before a council of bishops for stolen property and has her sons by Desiderius declared illegitimate; this is the last we hear of him.[571] And in possibly the most egregious case of a "fine example of unpunished wickedness", the ineptly named Innocentius, count of Javols, beats up and decapitates an abbot, and attempts unsuccessfully to conceal the murder, only to be elevated to the bishopric of Rodez with the support of queen Brunhild a short time later.[572]

The sense of moral variety in the *Histories* is compounded by Gregory's occasionally ambiguous treatment of his characters. The examples of the kings have been well-treated. Childebert is described, indirectly, as being replete with virtues, but is also portrayed as weak and unable to rule without the help of his uncle and mother. Guntram is by turns generous, merciful, paranoid and bloodthirsty. And even the "Nero and Herod of our time", Chilperic, is afforded

568 *Histories*, IV.18; see also V.5 and VII.25, where Chilperic's former physician Marileif is robbed by Merovech's men, treated kindly and sent back to Poitiers by Gregory, only to later be robbed even more thoroughly, so that he is reduced to servitude.

569 Again, this is the last we hear of him, other than the note that his mother was implicated in a plot against Guntram – *Histories* VIII.6, VIII.28

570 *Histories* X.12

571 *Histories*, X.8. We do hear earlier that Eulalius was humiliated by his wife's relationship with Desiderius, but the conclusion that everything turned out alright for him is still difficult to resist.

572 *Histories*, VI.37, 38. See below, p. 164-5

the odd moment of moderation and good judgement.[573] The Duke Guntram Boso, another sinner doomed to eventually die, is described ambiguously as "a good enough man in other ways, but too much given to breaking his word." The uncertainty over Boso's place in the moral schema is sustained through his fight with the man sent to arrest him, Duke Dragolen - "...he prayed to the lord and invoked the miraculous power of Saint Martin. Then he raised his spear and jabbed Dragolen square in the throat."[574]

Goffart's efforts to account for these inconsistencies in the moralizing tone of the narrative centre on the theme of irony and the question of audience. Gregory, it is claimed, is writing for an "educated, Roman-descended, and hereditarily Christian" audience, who share his sense of moral repugnance at the violence he reports, and as a result there is no need for Gregory to state overtly the moral implications of his lurid tales – "every effort is bent, as irony demands, on conveying a vivid and unforgettably negative impression without conveying overt disapproval. The details of any action are subordinated to the reader's knowing moral colour."[575] Thus, at a single stroke, Gregory's many moral understatements, omissions and apparent contradictions are accounted for by attributing to the author a consistently subtle and ironic tone designed to convey the futility of secular ambition to a learned and morally upright Gallo-Roman audience.

Gregory's use of satirical irony is an evident feature of his writing,[576] that first emerges spectacularly in his treatment the greatest Merovingian, Clovis. The final chapters of Book II do not shy away from the merciless treachery and double dealing by which Clovis brought all the Franks under his sway, in a process that involved the murder of many of his relatives. Some of the killings are justified by circumstances or the character of the victim, others are not. At the end of the saga Clovis makes a plaintiff cry for unknown relatives to come

573 For instance: Childebert - *Histories*, VII.33, VI.31. Guntram – VIII.5-6, X.10. Chilperic – VI.5, 10, 17 for a remarkably favourable portrayal of his conduct toward Jews and criminals, in contrast to his apparently unreserved condemnation at VI.46. See Halsall (2002), p. 342-344

574 *Histories* V.25; *contra* Dailey (2015), p. 149, who also points out that Gregory's presentation of Guntram Boso in *The Virtues of St Martin* is remarkably positive – VM XI.17

575 Goffart (1988), p. 137-8, 182

576 See Heinzelmann (2001), p. 91-2, citing *Histories* VI.40, IX.20 and V.5

forward, hoping, Gregory tells us, to lure them to their deaths. So it is not a little strange to find Gregory declaring in the same sequence that God gave this ruthlessly duplicitous figure victory because "he walked before Him with an upright heart and did what was pleasing in his sight."[577] Understatement is also clearly evident at times, such as in Gregory's description of the genocidal denouement of the siege of Comminges, on which he offers no overt statement of condemnation, but lets the awful events stand alone.[578] Or the violent death of the merchant Christopher, which is juxtaposed against the hoarding of food by merchants during a time of famine, without drawing an overt connection between the two.[579]

But the difficulties of universally applying such an interpretation are immediately evident, on close inspection of the text. As we have just seen, the gamut of Gregory's moral messaging, or lack thereof, is very broad. At one extreme – for instance in the deaths of the abbot Dagulf or the former count of Tours, Leudast – he makes explicit moral judgements on scenes where the moral subtext is achingly obvious. There is a tendency to hedge moral bets, so to speak, as guilty figures are accused of all kinds of crimes in addition to the immediate sin for which they are divinely punished - "The miserable creature had committed one crime after another, robberies, murders, and adulteries...".[580] As this passage implies, Gregory's accounts often leave some ambiguity over which sin was most relevant to the sinner's death, mixing mundane cautionary elements with graver sins. The dangers of excessive drinking are a recurrent theme, which is the undoing of dukes, priests and pious monks alike.[581] And dissension and ill-discipline resulting from hubris arise frequently as the immediate cause of death in military contexts.[582] Such heavy-handed bouts of moral condemnation, and the blending of mundane folly with mortal sin in the moralizing commentary, sit

577 *Histories*, II.40-42
578 *Histories*, VII.38
579 *Histories*, VII.38; VIII.46; also V.17.
580 *Histories* VII.3; VIII.19; VIII.40; X.14
581 Alcohol is the immediate cause of the literal downfall of the deacon Theodulf (X.14), and Childeric the Saxon, and was also the sole factor implicated in the sad fate of the Breton monk Winoch (V.21). This is discussed further in the next section.
582 For instance, Terentiolus and Desiderius – *Histories* VIII.30, 35

uncomfortably with the image of an author consistently deploying irony for the entertainment of an intellectually and morally homogeneous audience.[583]

At the other end of the moralizing spectrum – as in the cases of Eulalius and Innocentius – the subtext is not only unstated, it is also more than a little obscure, placing considerable demands on the ironic appreciation even of the theologically informed reader. Neither are the *Histories* entirely free of secular deaths which imply no moral judgement one way or other, since they are not contextualized in any events or personal descriptions. Of duke Bodegisil, Gregory simply states that he "died, at an advanced age, and his sons inherited his estate without having to forfeit any of it."[584] Overall the moral register of Gregory's prose, even in respect of characters who he considers to be beneath contempt, is frequently inconsistent. The picture that emerges is of an author with a predilection for extracting Christian moral meaning from the incidents he recounts, but not one whose moral aims are unerring, or who is always intent on selecting events for those purposes.

5.2 – Gregory's Attitude to Violence

As the example of Guntram Boso's fight with Dragolen implies, there are also substantial question marks over Gregory's feelings about the use of violence. At one extreme, Gregory's attitude and role in the narrative give the impression of a man who abhors violence and is apt to criticise even its most esteemed practitioners. He is not slow to report the excesses, mistakes and disasters that characterize the warfare of kings, and in many violent conflicts on a smaller scale no one emerges with much moral credit.[585] Gregory himself pleads on several occasions for the lives of guilty men, including the man who tried to supplant him as bishop.[586] But at other moments, Gregory takes unconcealed pleasure in the violent deaths of sinners, even when that death comes about at the

583 For further arguments to this effect, in relation both to Goffart and to Heinzelmann, see Shanzer (2002), p. 262, who also cites Vinay, G. *San Gregario di Tours* (1940), p. 68 on the "lack of uniformity and parallelism in the disposition of prologues and first chapters."
584 *Histories* VIII.22
585 For instance, *Histories* VI.10; V.49.
586 *Histories* V.49; VIII.6.

hands of equally reprehensible figures, who seem to become for a moment the instruments of God's judgement.[587] Goffart refers to such episodes as the "encounter between bad and worse" that characterizes Gregory's effort to convey the futility of secular existence through his writing, but this interpretation is open to question with regard to several executors of justified violence in the *Histories,* about whom Gregory shows much more ambivalence.[588]

A few cases involving the use of violence, that revolve around Gregory and his fellow bishops, are especially interesting and instructive with respect to the ambiguity of Gregory's moral sentiments. The first is picked out by Goffart as an example of a rare case in which omission from the *Histories* of some aspect of contemporary events can be deduced by reference to an external source, in this case Venantius Fortunatus.[589] In the *Histories*, Gregory relates how the Jews of Clermont were converted by the efforts of the Saintly bishop Avitus – who stated that they must do so or leave the city at once – after falling into conflict with some of the local population. What Gregory leaves out, according to Venantius, is that the Jews were converted under the swords of an angry mob.[590] Goffart suggests that the version given in the *Histories* "glows with the warmth and aura of miracle" such that "we almost overlook the ultimatum in the bishop's message". But this passes over, all too easily, an important point which is relevant both to the question of Gregory's willingness to distort events to his moral purposes and his attitude to the use of force.

The late sixth century was a period in which the Frankish church, with occasional royal aid and approval, was ostentatiously renewing and extending the suppression of Judaism and Jewish presence in public life.[591] Forced

587 Fredegund has Leudast and several others deserving miscreants killed; Childeric the Saxon cuts down Avius – *Histories,* X.27; VII.3

588 For instance, Chramnesind, killer of belligerent Sichar; and the Breton prince Thuederic, killer of the evil king Macliaw (V.16, IV.4). See below.

589 *Histories* V.11; Goffart 1988, p. 163-4

590 Fortunatus, *Carmina* 5.5, (ed. Leo), p. 107-112

591 Two Councils at Macon (583 and 585) restated the ban on Jews holding the office of *iudex,* and additionally banned them from acting as *tolinarii* (toll-collectors), and prohibited Jews from appearing in public between Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday. The Councils of Orleans (533) and Clermont (535) had already prohibited marriages between Jews and Christians, and the Council of Orleans had prohibited Jews from converting Christians – Mezei (2005), p. 20-21. See, also, Halfond, I. G. *The Archaeology of Frankish Church Councils, A.D. 511-768* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 102-3 For king Guntram's reported anti-Jewish rhetoric, *Histories* VIII.1

conversions cannot have seemed particularly scandalous, for elsewhere they were mandated by royal decree, and Gregory reports Chilperic's efforts to force the Jews to "see the truth" with approval.[592] Thus we have little reason to suspect that Gregory would be particularly scandalized by the use or threat of violence in the effort of conversion. And indeed, although Gregory effaces the direct link between the violence of the Clermont congregation and the conversion of the Jews, the fact that violence played a role in the process is not avoided, and the subtext of forced conversion is hardly assiduously concealed. Gregory gives us Avitus restraining the angry mob from killing a Jew, but the next day, as he informs us…

> "…The crowd following him attacked the Jewish synagogue, destroyed it down to its very foundations and levelled it to the ground. On another occasion the bishop sent this message to the Jews: 'I do not use force or compel you to confess to the son of God. I merely preach to you…"[593]

The passage, which runs straight from Avitus's congregation levelling the synagogue to Avitus claiming that he did not use force without pausing for breath, is pregnant with irony. If accidental, this implies that Gregory was not always aware of the ironic subtext of his prose, and if deliberate, it hints at an author who was more mischievous, and more sanguine about the use of force, than the concentrated moralist proposed by Goffart.

A second, related incident concerns the treatment by bishop Aurelius of Le Puy of a wandering miracle-worker from Bourges, whom Gregory describes as causing some disruption in Aurelius's diocese.[594] There is some suggestion that

592 *Histories* VI.17.

593 "Die autem beato, quo Dominus ad caelos post redemptum hominem gloriosus ascendit, cum sacerdos de aeclesiam ad basilicam psallendo procederet, inruit super sinagogae Iudaeorum multitudo tota sequentium, distructamque a fundamentis, campi planitiae locus adsimilatur. Alia autem die sacerdos eis legatos mittit, dicens: 'Vi ego vos confiteri Dei Filium non inpello, sed tamen praedico et salem scientiae vestris pectoribus trado. Pastor sum enim dominicis ovibus superpositus; et de vobis ille verus Pastor, qui pro nobis passus est, dixit, habere se alias oves quae non sunt ex ovili suo, quas eum oporteat adducere, ut fiat unus grex et unus pastor. Ideoque si vultis credere ut ego, estote unus grex, costodi me posito; sin vero aliud, abscedite a loco."

594 *Histories* X.25

the man's followers pose a physical threat – they rob people on the road,[595] and they are described by Gregory as forming a kind of "army" seeking "war" with the bishop – but overall the tone is comic rather than menacing. Certainly the 'viros strenuos' sent by Aurelius to investigate after the bishop is accosted by some naked 'emissaries', are not intimidated by the enthusiastic rabble. The inquiries are short-lived, and end with the bishop's men bowing in a false gesture of supplication, before rugby tackling the wanderer and stabbing him to death. "So died this Christ, more worthy to be called an Antichrist..." says Gregory with evident satisfaction. But Gregory's praise, as so often, is reserved for the miserable fate of the victim rather than the virtues of the killers, and the subsequent passage again muddies the moral waters, as Gregory describes his reaction to similar figures in his own diocese… "I did my best to argue with them and to make them give up their inane pretensions."[596] Thus Gregory at once shows approval for the unceremonious killing of a wandering preacher, but almost in the same breath implies that he himself does not do such things under similar circumstances, leaving the reader in some doubt about his attitude to bishop Aurelius's conduct.

In the third case – the denouement of the princess Clotild's rebellion at a Poitiers nunnery – Gregory himself enters the fray as an instigator of violence. Clotild, we are told, had taken over the nunnery and thrown out the Abbess with the help of "a band of cut-throats, evil-doers, fornicators, fugitives from justice and men guilty of every crime in the calendar."[597] Childebert and Guntram convene a council of bishops, but Gregory refuses to attend until the rebels are subdued by force - "'I will not set foot in Poitiers', I said, 'until the local count has used his authority to put down this bloodthirsty rebellion which Clotild has stirred up.'" Gregory describes, with considerable candour, just what that "authority" amounts to in practice - "He crushed the rising, knocking some over the heads with staves, running others through with spears and using swords to cut down those who were really determined to resist… Some they roped to posts and beat severely. Some had their hair cut off, others their hands, some even their

595 Although, in another moment of moral ambiguity, they give all their earnings to the poor.
596 Cf. *Histories*, IX.6, in which Gregory pleads for the life of another such man.
597 On the identities of these vaguely described figures, see next section, p. 208-211

ears and noses."[598] Thus, Gregory claims vicarious credit for the ending of the revolt, but in doing so he also takes vicarious credit for deaths, mutilations and beatings that it entailed. The contrast with, for instance, the conduct of the saintly hermit Eparchius, who rescues a guilty felon from death against the wishes of locals, is stark.[599]

These examples cast into doubt the concept of an audience, "as blameless as Gregory himself", who consistently looked askance at the violence portrayed in the *Histories*. Avitus, Aurelius, and Gregory himself were esteemed Gallo-Romans of good stock and high dignity, and all showed an occasional predilection for countenancing the conspicuous use of force in the pursuit of their aims. The same may be said of the apparently Gallo-Roman Eunomius, who replaced Gregory's *bete-noire* Leudast as count of Tours; Eulalius, the count of Clermont; queen Brunhild's favourite, Innocentius; and so forth.[600] The involvement in serious violence of these prominent and well-connected apparent Gallo-Romans, who would theoretically be ideal candidates for members of Goffart's assumed morally upstanding audience, undermines the contention that Gregory's moral understatements regarding violence should consistently be understood as winks to an audience who exist "on a higher plane" to the brutality they regard.[601] Violence was apparently distasteful to Gregory, often reprehensible, but by no means automatically evil, and neither were its instigators and practitioners. In some cases his feelings about violence and violent people are equivocal and ambiguous. Therefore the argument that his evocations of violence were consistently expected to provoke moral revulsion in his audience, or selected to cast shadows against the light of the saints' miracles – and the corresponding characterization of his accounts of violence an unjustifiably exaggerated caricature – cannot be sustained.

598 *Histories* X.15
599 *Histories* VI.8
600 See above, n. 30-31
601 Goffart (1988), p. 179. Gregory shows a similar ambivalence toward justified violence in his hagiography, for instance in *Lives of the Fathers* VII, in which St Gregory of Langres punishes criminals mercilessly in life, but after death miraculously releases the same kinds of people. See also, *VP* I; *Glory of the Martyrs* 5.

This is not at all to imply that Gregory's moral pretensions do not profoundly influence his portrayal of violence, but rather to suggest that those moral pretensions cannot be reduced to a determination to contrast the secular to the divine, and that his motivations in describing violence were not limited to moral edification alone. The tendency to omission and interpolation for dramatic and agenda-laden purposes is firmly established, but the character, scale and goals of this tendency are more difficult to pin down. Goffart argues effectively that the gaps in Gregory's narrative cannot be accounted for purely on the basis that he was 'at the mercy of his sources', but the contention that the *Histories* consistently include such moments and figures as are convenient to a presentation of a world divided between saints and sinners, and leaves out those who are inconvenient, is much less firm, and is only one among a range of possible explanatory factors. It is necessary to look for other motivations and agendas in Gregory's work, and to entertain the possibility that while he certainly emphasised violence at times, he may also have effaced and ignored it at others.

5.3 – Political Pressures and Omissions

Another potentially significant pressure on the *Histories* emphasised by Ian Wood among others was Gregory's political position as bishop of Tours, operating under turbulent and dangerous kings and queens who were highly sensitive to perceived slanders.[602] The *Histories* are pitted with tales of this or that notable figure being brutally punished for alleged slander of the royal family, and it is quite clear that written evidence could be deployed against its authors to bring about their destruction.[603] As Wood points out, Gregory's loyalty was suspected by some and his own position as bishop was not entirely secure, having been seriously threatened by the machinations of the two Riculfs.[604]

602 Wood (1993), (2002); Dailey (2015), p. 149-152; Dolan, A. "'You Would Do Better to Keep Your Mouth Shut:' The Significance of Talk in Sixth-Century Gaul", in *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 40 (2012), p. 9

603 *Histories* V.25; V.27; V.46; V.49; VI.22. Cf. VII.30; VIII.31.

604 The priest and subdeacon who nearly unseated Gregory at the instigation of Leudast - Wood (1993), p. 257; *Histories* V.49

Questions about how Gregory's writing was affected by political pressures have been answered in a wide variety of ways, and the answers are deeply entwined with the torturous arguments about the dating of the *Histories'* composition.[605] Goffart's argument, that an attribution of saintly powers to a part of king Guntram's cloak in book nine probably dates the passage to after Guntram's death in 592, is persuasive.[606] But the subsequent story, in book ten, describing how Guntram rashly ordered the death of his Chamberlain, muddies the waters.[607] Ian Wood points out the change in tone between measured criticism to outright condemnation of king Chilperic at the point of his assassination in 584, which might imply a certain constraint being lifted by his death, although we have already seen that Gregory's moral tone in relation to Chilperic is somewhat inconsistent.[608] And Guy Halsall argues that the preface to Book V was intended as a kind of sermon to the Frankish prince Merovech in the midst of the political upheavals of the later 570s, endorsing a synchronic impression of the composition of the last six books. But Alexander Callendar Murray argues effectively – partly on the basis of the dating even of the earlier chapters by Childebert's regnal years, rather than those of Chilperic or Guntram, who ruled Tours prior to 585 – that composition of the last five books did not begin prior to that date.[609]

Murray's reasoning is most persuasive, and the suggestion that the *Histories* was recording near-contemporary events in the final books, but not earlier, is circumstantially supported by the weather reports uniquely attached to the ends of Books IX and X.[610] The overall impression is of a composition process beginning in the 580s, then being supplemented quite close to the events in question, before being edited with hindsight in the last phase of Gregory's life,[611] albeit with all the constraints involved in the bishop's many theological, pastoral

605 For a recent summary of the debate see Halsall (2007), p. 306-308, citing Heinzelmann 2001, p. 114-115; see also, De Nie, G. *Views from a Many Windowed Tower: Studies of Imagination in the Works of Gregory of Tours* (Amsterdam 1987), p. 29-36
606 Goffart (1988), p. 176, citing *Histories* IX.21
607 *Histories* X.10
608 See above, n. 32
609 Halsall (2007), p. 314-316; Murray (2015), p. 91-4
610 *Histories* IX.9; X.30
611 cf. Wallace-Hadrill, J. M. "The work of Gregory of Tours in light of modern research", in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* vol. 1 (1951), p. 34-35

and political involvements, as well as the vicissitudes of editing vellum documents. But the lack of early manuscripts, and consequent possibility of undetected interpolations added to an early original at a later date, make these questions impossible to resolve decisively. Whatever the exact dates, the latter part of the *Histories* cannot but have been written close to the time of the events that they described, and all these historians agree that Gregory and his work were not free from the politics of his time.

Murray's most forceful argument relates to the relative inattention paid by Gregory to the character of Childebert, the king who held power over Tours from 585 onward, and his mother, Brunhild.[612] Childebert's political involvements, and his wars, are neither neglected nor treated favourably, but compared with his two uncles, Chilperic and Guntram, who for better or worse are both subjected to personal judgement by Gregory, the account of Childebert feels decidedly reserved. The *Histories* are not as disposed to put words in Childebert's mouth than they are Guntram's, or to account in detail for his conversations with Gregory, and the same contrast may be observed between Brunhild and Fredegund, the latter of whom Gregory condemns with some freedom.[613] At times the treatment of Fredegund seems positively gossipy, as in the accounts of her conflicts with her daughter Rigunth, or that of her last recorded violent act, which is one of the few instances in which Gregory bothers to name freemen below the status of count (in this case her victims).[614]

Even in Fredegund's case, the *Histories* are more taciturn on the subject of her sexual behaviour – which bore on the legitimacy of the prince Lothar's succession – than they are about her sponsorship of violence, which Gregory speculates on without apparent compunction.[615] And there is something in the presentation of Fredegund of the ambiguity toward violence that we have observed in the *Histories*: As we have seen, she appears as the instrument of

612 Ibid, p. 94-5; cf. Daily 2015, p. 141-3, who (following Heinzelmann) traces Gregory's loyalty to Brunhild and Sigebert back to the 560s. Gregory's attitude to both figures, however, was not entirely positive. See below, and (for Sigebert,) *Histories* VI.49-51

613 Not, however, without some qualification and restraint – see below and Chapter 6, p. 232-234

614 *Histories* X.27

615 Wood (1993), p. 307; Dailey (2015), p. 154-6, who points out that Gregory subtly and indirectly calls Fredgund's marital fidelity into question.

divine vengeance against Gregory's *bete noire*, the former count Leudast. The men of Tournai whom Fredegund kills are not portrayed sympathetically, leading one to suspect that their end, too, was considered fitting. And although she is made to condemn her own behaviour most stridently after the deaths of her sons, Fredegund is given full credit for the subsequent decision to destroy the unjust tax records held by king Chilperic.[616]

In the case of Brunhild, Gregory provides nothing like the vividly personal depiction offered of Fredegund or (much more briefly) Austrechild, but rather generally portrays her at a safe dramatic distance as a peacemaker and loyal protector of her royal son.[617] The one personal description comes early in the *Histories*, and offers us the youthful and still Arian Brunhild, just arrived from Spain: "This young woman was elegant in all that she did, lovely to look at, chaste and decorous in her behaviour, wise in her generation and of good address."[618] After such an auspicious start (and given her influence in Gregory's diocese) we might expect further such complements to burnish Brunhild's later life, but, in contrast to king Guntram, no aura of benevolence and sanctity is attached to her. On the contrary, Brunhild is implicated, by association, in the violence of several of the other figures in the *Histories* and other undefined evils. We have already seen how the murderous count Innocentius was elevated to the bishopric of Rodez with Brunhild's assistance, and the sequence of events deploys a technique of moral understatement – the presentation of a story across two sequential chapters – which we have already seen in the case of the merchant Christopher: The abbot of St Privatus is accused by Innocentius of slandering Brunhild, but appears before her and clears himself with an oath. On his way home the abbot is killed by Innocentius. And finally, in the next chapter, Brunhild helps to elevate Innocentius to the bishopric.[619] In another suggestive

616 *Histories* V.34

617 *Histories* IX.38. See Dailey (2015), p. 141-153

618 *Histories* IV.26

619 *Histories* VI.36-37. Daily points to signs of form for this kind of act in Brunhild's part in the murder of bishop Desiderius – which is referred to in Sisebut's "Life and Sufferings of the Holy Desiderius", the anonymous "Sufferings of the Holy Desiderius, Bishop and Martyr", and the Chronicles of Fredegar – as well as noting the evil reputation ascribed to her posthumously by Fredegar. He takes the position that Gregory's rather unsubtle implication of Brunhild in the murder of Lupentius is purely accidental, and (somewhat uncharitably) avers that the lack of positive references to Brunhild in the *Histories* may have resulted from an objective shortage of material, although he does agree that Gregory was politically

moment, Gregory reports that in the course of praising Brunhild's son Childebert king Guntram stated, in passing, that "it is true enough that his mother Brunhild openly menaced my life, but as far as I am concerned this is a matter of small moment".[620] Sometime later, Brunhild is revealed as the royal sponsor of the drunken and violent citizen of Tours, Sichar, whose death she attempts to avenge against the better judgement of her son.[621] The overall impression is that Brunhild was a formidable and occasionally murderous enemy, but this impression is conveyed subtly and indirectly, with no overt criticism on Gregory's part.

This careful deployment of understatement returns us to the theme of irony and satire raised earlier, and particularly to the treatment of the Frankish founder Clovis, who is praised as an exemplar of Christian uprightness in the midst of an account of the murders of his former allies and extended family. To a mind informed by the moral register of the likes of Salvian or Eusebius, such a juxtaposition would seem obviously satirical.[622] But the fact that Gregory later appeals to the example of Clovis, with no evident irony, in the preface to Book V as an example for present kings to follow, implies that he did not expect everyone in his potential audience to appreciate the satirical implications of the earlier passage, or indeed the inconsistency of describing Clovis as a king who did not indulge in civil war with his fellow Franks. There is a sense that Gregory is playing two moral games with Clovis: one that overtly accepts and endorses violence as innate to his virtue, and a more subtle one that questions and undermines this connection. This may be reflective of the tensions entailed in writing for a morally heterogeneous audience with varying opinions both of violence and of the Frankish royal family.

---

constrained in his criticism of Brunhild. See Dailey (2015), p. 119-126. The reliability of this evidence is, however, questionable, given the political and moral agendas of the later sources – see Nelson, J. L. "Queens as Jezebels: the career of Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History", in J. Nelson (ed.), *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986), p. 27-31. For a full list of sources for Brunhild, see McRobbie (2012), p. 131-2

620 "Verum quia mater eius Brunichildis me minatur interimere, sed nihil mihi ex hoc formidinis est. Dominus enim, qui me eripuit de manibus inimicorum meorum, et de huius insidiis liberavit me". A similar personal conflict between Brunhild and Fredegund is also mentioned, but only fleshed out on Fredegund's part.

621 *Histories* IX.19

622 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* V.Intro; cf. Halsall (2007), p. 316; Goffart (1988), p. 168-9

It seems, then, that Gregory to some extent felt the constraints of the political environment in which he wrote, resulting in a certain degree of understatement and reticence regarding powerful figures about whom he must certainly have had extensive knowledge. His handling of the local politics of his own Tours diocese tends to confirm this impression. In Gregory's time as bishop, Tours had probably three counts – Leudast, who held power until 580, Eunomius, who took over by order of Chilperic and therefore was probably replaced not long after 584, and a probable third count who would have been in power at the time the *Histories* were being completed. The first of these figures, a low-born man who was long dead by the time of the *Histories*' completion, is by far the most thoroughly treated, in terms of his background, personality and conduct in and out of office. The second, probably of better family and certainly of more recent providence, is given only momentary attention, primarily to document his involvement in the murder of a Jewish merchant. The anonymous third is conspicuous by his total absence from the narrative as a personality, remaining unnamed despite the fact that occasion arises to identify him, again under dubious circumstances. In all, the politics of Tours is studiously avoided after the early 580s, at which time Gregory was nearly deprived of his bishopric amid accusations of disloyalty. And given the apparent constraints associated with royal politics, we may wonder whether this correlation between Gregory's willingness to calumniate his local counts and their ability to seek reprisals can be regarded as mere coincidence.[623]

Political pressures may, then, have affected Gregory's editorial choices, but they were not the only factor that could induce him to remain silent on the subject of violence. On a dozen occasions in the *Histories* we are presented with vague allusions to extensive records of vice or virtue, upon which Gregory frustratingly declines to elaborate.[624] The Count of the Stables, Pelagius, provides a typical example: "He was responsible for endless robberies, attacks, assaults, woundings, and crimes of all sorts, on land and down the rivers", Gregory tells

623 For Eunomius and his aptly named deputy, Injuriosus, *Histories* VII.23. Animodius, the deputy of the probable third count, is said to have aided in the escape of Chuppa after his plundering of the Tours region, but the name of the count is not reported – *Histories* X.5

624 *Histories* V.5; V.49; VI.8; VI.20; VII.13; VII.22; VIII.30 (Guntram's army); VIII.32; VIII.40; IX.12; X.8.

us, but we must be satisfied with the couple of incidents that touched the bishop personally and illustrated God's vengeance.[625] The typical reasons given by Gregory for these failures to elaborate is lack of space, and fear of going beyond what is decent, the latter reasoning being deployed most frequently in the cases of the several bishops who Gregory accuses of undefined excesses.[626] It might be tempting to regard this kind of generalized condemnation as a mere convention designed to further damn a person to whom Gregory was clearly personally hostile – and in some cases this seems likely[627] – but a number of other moments in the *Histories* imply that automatic dismissal of these generalizations would be unfair.

First, Gregory does not merely employ this device of omission in condemning sinners, but also on several occasions in praising the good. "I have heard many other good reports about Chrodin", Gregory tells us, "but I have no space to report them here."[628] Second, and more importantly, the subtext of some of what Gregory reports implies that he does not assiduously document even serious collective incidents of violence. In the course of documenting Guntram's much-celebrated visit to Orleans in 585, Gregory informs us that the king was approached by the Jews of the city, who hoped "that their synagogue, which had been destroyed some time ago by the Christians, should be rebuilt with public funds."[629] Were it not for this petition, which was made almost under the eyes of Gregory himself, it is quite clear that we would have heard nothing of the destruction of this synagogue, which is not mentioned anywhere else. The same logic applies to the destruction of the synagogue of Clermont, which is only offered to us in the course of explaining how the local Jews were converted to Christianity.[630] The mere destruction of a synagogue by an angry mob, it seems, was not sufficiently interesting to be worthy of mention without the addition of the royal, saintly or personal elements that characterise the *Histories*, leaving the

625 *Histories* VIII.40
626 *Histories* V.5; VIII.39.
627 As in the miraculous story of the anonymous perjurer forced to tell the truth by the power of St Martin – *Histories* VIII.16
628 *Histories* VI.20; also VI.8.
629 *Histories* VIII.1
630 See above.

reader to wonder how many such incidents eluded Gregory's pen for lack of personal, political and moral resonance.

Given that fairly spectacular and local incidents of violence are apt to escape Gregory's attentions, we should not be surprised if he generally ignores mundane personal acts beneath the level of politically consequential and morally instructive murders. The overwhelming majority of non-lethal assaults reported in the *Histories* are committed against bishops and priests, who were surely better protected than ordinary laymen by the power of the Church. Most of those, and all of the non-ecclesiastical assaults mentioned in the *Histories*, occur in the context of political intrigues, murders and miraculous deaths. And apart from the uniquely politically significant and morally convenient case of duke Amalo, individual instances of rape are entirely unrepresented. The same silence surrounds marital violence and that between parents and children, with each being mentioned on only one occasion. Such non-lethal events were too scandalous or too ordinary to figure among Gregory's concerns,[631] but the fact that they are considerably more frequent than the severe violence preferred by Gregory in almost every statistically measured society on earth should alert us to the possibility that the *Histories* badly under-represents such behaviour.[632] Thus Gregory may have been sensationally emphasising politically and morally spectacular moments of violence, but just as he obscured the ordinary business of non-violent daily existence, he effaced the mundane and inconsequential incidents of violence that lay beyond his dramatic scenarios.

* * *

The overall picture that emerges of the *Histories'* approach to violence is one driven by a shifting mixture of motives, ranging from the highest Christian morality to political commentary and more mundane personal interest, which frequently overlap. His attitude to violence is frequently hostile but varies

631 This question will be addressed in the next section.
632 The sole exception being the Gebusi of Papua New Guinea (Knauft 1987), although even here the evidence is questionable. See Chapter 1, p. 37

according to context, and his work seems suited to consumption by an audience whose literary sophistication and morality varied widely. Goffart is surely right in crediting Gregory with a considerable flair for satire, but if that satire often escaped the notice of several learned historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it almost certainly went entirely over the heads of some contemporary readers, particularly those whose stock-in-trade was exactly the kind of violence to which the *Histories* frequently register such carefully understated antipathy. Importantly for present purposes, Gregory's criteria for selection of violence, although not as narrowly didactic as Goffart proposes, was still quite strict, and anything that fell outside of those criteria was liable not to be included. Thus, while we cannot consider the *Histories* to be a reliable guide to the ordinary tone of social life, we equally cannot assume that they consistently exaggerated violence and disorder, and must also give attention to the many gaps in his account.

Chapter 6: Violence and Violent Individuals in the *Histories*

So far the *Histories* have been analysed primarily in terms of literary style and authorial agendas, arguing against the negative case that the violence reported by Gregory of Tours can be dismissed as a literary device deployed for moral effect. As we have seen, the purposes served by Gregory's reports of violence are variable and often multi-faceted, with personal and political elements mixed seamlessly with Christian morality, cautionary tales, and satire. There are signs of ambiguity in Gregory's attitude to violence, which is sometimes endorsed, even if its executors are not. And while Gregory often emphasised violence, and selected the most egregious examples for moral and dramatic effect, he also sometimes effaced it for political or ecclesiastical reasons or ignored it as unworthy of his attention. The overall impression was of a text with a clear tendency to Christian moralizing, but also with a number of other narrative tendencies which sometimes conflicted with one another.

There remains the question of what can be positively gleaned about contemporary violence and warrior culture from the information provided by Gregory of Tours. We have come full circle from the opening chapter, in which an incident related by Gregory was used to open a discussion of the multi-variant causation of violence.[633] And – having considered some of the most salient factors in the origins and mores of the military elites of the Frankish kingdoms, through the late-Roman evidence and the *Lex Salica* – it is now possible to bring our modified perspective on the causes and consequences of violence to bear on the uniquely detailed narrative evidence of the *Histories*. But first it is worth briefly recapitulating the conclusions that will underlie our analysis of that evidence.

The world of violence that emerges from the *Histories* will be very different from the psychologically simple and physiologically bland one interrogated by historians who have taken on the task – in one form or other – to date.[634] Our

633 Introduction, p. 6-7
634 See Chapter 1, p. 22-28

earlier discussion of violence revealed its deep and lasting impact on the mental states and physiologies of witnesses and participants. Importantly, it was established that these physiological and psychological effects are both a consequence *and a cause* of violence. Far from eliminating cultural factors, these observations brought into relief the vital role played by culture in subjective interpretations of experiences of violence and its role in social relations, which exert a profound effect on the behavioural consequences of experiencing violence.[635] These findings promise to fundamentally alter our interpretation of sources like the *Histories*, which provide us with relatively detailed accounts of incidents of violence and the individuals involved in them. Where previously, informed by cultural theory and the Clausewitzian dictum, "war is politics by other means", historians tended to view the robberies, assaults and killings in normative and strategic terms, Chapter 1 brought into relief much more sharply such factors as trauma, learned aggression, desensitization, hostile attribution biases, 'learned' enjoyment of violence, and the interplay of these factors with cultural mores and social practices. Without blithely seeking to ascribe all the violence described by Gregory to such factors, we can for the first time treat them as intrinsic to the phenomenon, and view the *Histories* as a uniquely valuable source of evidence for the interaction of contemporary norms and socio-economic forces with the psychological and physiological aspects of violence.

This revised field of fundamental assumptions about the causes and consequences of violence has already profoundly affected our interpretation of the late-imperial origins of the Frankish kingdoms, and their laws. The argument was made that the late-Roman army around the northern frontiers was already moving away from reliance on professional training and camp discipline to a system that delegated the creation of military preparedness to local and 'barbarian' groups, when the region was taken over by a Frankish elite for whom military and ordinary social life were even less effectively partitioned.[636] It was proposed that the Salian Laws, interpreted from this perspective, constructed a configuration of numerical equivalences between all kinds of offences that systematically encouraged the use of violence in settling scores, and gave the

635 Chapter 1, p. 28-37
636 See Chapter 2-3.

wealthy and powerful considerable freedom and even incentives to use violence against the social and economic inferiors, making relative impunity and vulnerability to violence an important index of social status.[637]

From the outset, however, the conceptual difficulty of viewing the *Histories* through the lens of modern research into violence must be acknowledged. The conceptual categories for describing the causes and consequences of violence which were available to Gregory are not those of the modern social sciences, and as a result his appreciation of such concepts as psychological trauma or behavioural conditioning – for which direct equivalents do not exist in his Latin vocabulary – is necessarily indirect.[638] Indeed, Gregory is not concerned with violence as a concept that spans the various acts from murder to petty, non-injurious assaults in the way that modern researchers are, for the simple reason that no such concept existed in his time. Nevertheless, a central argument of the first chapter was that modern research into violence identifies physiologically real consequences in the psychological and behavioural trajectories of all humans and indeed many other animals, which exist whether or not such concepts are fully intellectually appreciated.[639] But this does not mean that we should simply attempt to crudely super-impose our modern categories onto such conceptually unsympathetic material as the *Histories*. If anything, our attempt to deduce a more theoretically informed picture of the violence portrayed by Gregory will be enhanced by properly appreciating his categories and their practical and moral connotations. And coming to grips with Gregory's culturally informed conceptual schema does not preclude the possibility of considering his evidence through the lens of modern research. By comparing and contrasting Gregory's categorizations of violent acts, the moral judgement that he ascribes to them, and the behavioural assumptions associated with those judgements, with modern analyses of comparable behaviour, we stand to learn much about the differences between his society and our own.

637 Chapter 4.
638 This is not to say that Gregory had no appreciation of these concepts. See below, p. 213-214
639 Chapter 1.

Therefore it will be necessary to consider the information presented to us in the *Histories* on two levels, so to speak: an 'internal' level that looks at the incidents and characters in question through the language of Gregory – a language which would have been more familiar to contemporaries and carries vital information about their concepts and values, and those of the author; and an 'external' level that reinterprets those incidents and characters through the lens of modern terminology, considering their social and psychological implications in terms of social learning, behavioural conditioning, desensitization etc in light of the values and concepts presented in the Salian Laws and the *Histories*.

A first and preliminary section will comprise a brief discussion of the frequency and severity of the most serious and frequently studied forms of violence – warfare and the killings of major political figures – suggested by the *Histories*, as well as the degree of political disorder and fluidity that could create the conditions for violence. It will be argued that the period was one of political disorder, in which rural territory was frequently devastated by technologically and logistically unsophisticated armies. And in which the greater military and social elites to whom Gregory pays attention were personally proficient and involved in violence, and were consequently frequently exposed to its most lethal consequences.

The second section will comprise a 'internal'-level analysis of the *Histories'* language, reviewing the terms deployed by Gregory to describe what we define as "violence" and "warriors", and the concepts and value-judgements that underlie them. Special attention will be paid to the contexts in which these terms arise, which can tell us much about Gregory's attitude to violence and its perpetrators, as well as the sometimes discernibly different attitudes and habits of his contemporaries. And these observations will be linked to an 'external'-level analysis which argues that the vagueness of Gregory's terminology is indicative of a culture pervaded by violence-linked concepts that suggest that small-scale physical abuse and fighting was not just conventional but also integral to the negotiation and maintenance of the social order, and vital to the inculcation of practical and psychological attributes that made men willing and able to participate in battle.

A third and final section will elaborate on this discussion, focusing on the martial and retributive values that promoted violence among Gregory's contemporaries, and further evidence of elite impunity and hierarchical violence. At the 'internal' level, the the careers of some of the better-documented violent individuals in the *Histories*, as well as Gregory's opinion of them, will be evaluated in detail. And at the 'external' level, it will be argued that such socially legitimate and necessary violence generated aggressive and volatile behavioural profiles among the elite, which led to ill-considered and pathological acts of violence that understandably attracted Gregory's moral concern. There is good reason, in fact, to view such acts as indicative of what modern researchers would describe as "maladaptive aggression", "hostile attribution bias", "violent self-image" etc among Gregory's milieu, which are predictable outcomes of frequent exposure to violence. In other words, it will be argued that the *Histories* provides considerable and hitherto un-recognized evidence for what we would describe as behavioural conditioning and even trauma among Gregory's contemporaries, implying that the violence he described is the visible tip of an iceberg of physical abuse and psychological adaptation experienced by his protagonists.

6.1 – Evidence for Violence and Disorder in the *Histories*

There is a wide range of opinion on the extent of violence and disorder implied by the *Histories*. At one end, broadly, stand historians like Walter Pohl and Wolf Liebeschuetz, who follow earlier historians like Marc Bloch in viewing the conduct detailed by Gregory as indicative of a society where violence was relatively frequent and ordinary.[640] At the other are those, like Walter Goffart and Guy Halsall, who regard the *Histories* as fundamentally unreliable on this subject, and the differences in contexts and agendas between Gregory and his late-Roman predecessors to be too profound to extract any meaningful sense of

640 Wood, I. *The modern origins of the early middle ages* (Oxford 2013), p. 241-2, citing Bloch, M. "La societe du Haut Moyen Age et ses origines" (1926); Pohl (2006); Leibeschuetz (2006); Sarti (2013); cf. James, E. "The militarization of Roman society, 400-700", in A. N. Jorgensen & B. L. Clausen (eds.), *Military aspects of Scandinavian society in a European perspective AD 1-1300*, (Kopenhagen 1997), p. 19-24.

the relative violence of the era.[641] Arguments against the utility of Gregory's work for comprehending contemporary violence have already been addressed, but the question of difference between the *Histories* and earlier and later sources, which together we might hope would give us some sense of direction of change, is more insoluble. The differences between these other sources and the *Histories* with respect to violence have been thoroughly discussed, and need not be recapitulated again here; suffice to say that with respect to warfare, comparing the *Histories* to Ammianus, Hydatius, Fredegar or the Royal Frankish Annals is a line of investigation that raises many questions and provides no solid answers.[642] For our purposes, an even more profound problem with these other sources is that they simply do not descend to the level of non-royal, small-scale conflict in the way that Gregory does. Therefore we must accept the impossibility of establishing any firm quantitative sense of changes in social violence between the late empire and Gregory's time.

This fact does not, however, stand in the way of a sustained analysis of the information provided by Gregory to generate a sense of the extent of violence and disorder in contemporary society. And we certainly cannot lightly aver, as some historians have done, that the extent of violence may not be particularly important to an overall analysis of the Frankish kingdoms or their warriors, or be content with the untenable assumption that sixth-century Gaul was not more or less violent than any other society.[643] On the contrary, our discussion of violence demands that we treat a warrior culture and the lived experience of its participants as intimately linked, so that every effort must be made to understand how they interrelate even if detailed and reliable data is unavailable. As a matter of necessity, most of our analysis will concern the language of Gregory and – at one degree of inference – that of the warrior culture to which he alludes. But it is necessary to recognize that a culture that from one perspective might be viewed as linguistically obsessed by violence – such as our own – can in fact reflect a

641 Goffart (2008); Fouracre (1998); Halsall (1998), p. 4; cf. Fouracre, P. "'Placita' and the settlement of disputes in later Merovingian Francia", (1986), p. 38. Other historians do not explicitly comment on the question of extent of violence – See for instance, Wood (2006).

642 Fouracre (1998), p. 68-71

643 Halsall (1998), p. 4, explicitly states this position. The assumption underlies much of the work done by the low-violence school. cf. Liebeschuetz 2006, p. 38, citing Fouracre 1998, p. 60-61.

society in which violence is strictly circumscribed and does not form a substantial aspect of the life experience of most people.[644] In short, a relatively non-violent society may describe itself with the language of violence, and therefore the language of violence in and of itself does not necessarily tell us very much about the broader place of violence in culture. To understand that, we must take an interest in practical physical realities as well as the language used to define them, even in the face of admittedly difficult evidence. And in fact, the *Histories* do provide some instructive information that helps to build a tentative picture of the extent of violence among the Frankish elites, and the weakness of the institutional mechanisms that might have prevented it. This information is a valuable complement to the cultural evidence, helping to contextualise it in the practical exigencies of military and social life.

Warfare constitutes a central theme of the *Histories*, being more extensively accounted for than any other phenomenon, but even on this subject Gregory's coverage is partial and locally oriented, especially with respect to the levying of forces and the depredations inflicted by armies. Nonetheless, for the Tours region at least, we are well-provided with information, which illustrates the considerable exposure of the region both to military destruction and recruitment. The forces of Tours, or a part thereof, were called to arms on behalf of Frankish kings and their servants on ten occasions in the sixteen odd years (c.576-591) covered in Books V to X in the *Histories*, splitting their activities equally between internal and external campaigns.[645] How general the call to arms was is unclear, but in some instances, as when Chilperic orders the 'pauperes' and 'iuniores' of Tours cathedral to be punished for not joining his expedition against Brittany, it is clearly not confined to a narrow professional class or social elite.[646] Nonetheless, punishment for non-attendance is only mentioned occasionally, and the concepts of camp training and regular payment in exchange for military service are never evoked, implying that the army was mostly self-motivated and

644 cf. Pohl (2006), p. 21

645 External campaigns – *Histories* V.26; V.29; VIII.30; IX.25; IX.29; X.3. Internal or defensive campaigns – VI.12; VI.31; VII.13; VII.24; VII.28; IX.12.

646 *Histories*, V.26. Although these obscure figures may not have been as lowly as their name implies – see below.

socially prepared for war.[647] In one incident, contingents from Poitiers and Tours within the army fall into conflict, resulting in a mass desertion by the Tourangeaux, but given the uniqueness of the circumstances it is hard to know how indicative this was of the weakness of military organization and discipline.[648] Whatever the case, the clear implication is that in this period, military service was a frequent and normative feature of elite social life.[649]

In the same sixteen year period, the Tours region suffered the depredations of visiting armies, half of which may be loosely described as non-hostile or friendly forces, on at least another ten occasions.[650] Beyond such basic observations, however, there is much uncertainty, since Gregory is not much disposed to estimating the size or impact of armies except in the vaguest terms; on some occasions he offers us little more than the vague accusation that the army committed "multa scelera".[651] As a result there is a tendency to concertina what must have been incidents of widely varying severity into an indistinct mass, raising the question of whether his accounts of the activities of non-hostile forces in particular are dramatically over-sold. While we are not provided with any clear demarcations between the activities of hostile and non-hostile armies, Gregory does offer some indirect evidence in accounting for the depredations of Desiderius and Bladast's forces, who he accuses as behaving "just as if they were in enemy territory".[652] Such an accusation, we are given to understand, consisted in the fact that the army "set fire to everything, stole everything that they could lay their hands on, and murdered the inhabitants out of hand… [and] captured those who they did not kill".[653] When we compare this description to the other

647 Punishments mentioned at V.26, VI.31

648 *Histories* VII.13

649 This point is broadly agreed even among several historians who do not see the period as particularly violent – For instance, Halsall (1998), p. 30; Wickham, C. *Framing the Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford 2005), p. 177-8

650 This was not a regular pattern: most of the incidents are concentrated in the period 576-585, before a five-year quiet period that comes to an end in the foreign campaigns of 590. For attacks by hostile forces – Histories V.1; V.4; V.14; VI.12; VII.12. For depredations by ostensibly non-hostile forces – V.2; VI.31; VI.45; VII.21; VII.24; X.9 and possibly at X.3. Whether the plundering of Riginth's baggage train, moving from Paris to Toulouse (VI.45), affected the Tours region is open to question.

651 e.g. Histories V.1

652 "*...sicut solet contra inimicos...*" - Histories VI.31. Similar language is used in describing the actions of Childebert's forces in the Metz region on the way to attack Italy in c.590.

653 "incendia, praedas et homicidia tanta fecerunt... nam et captivus adduxerunt, de quibus spoliatus plurimus postea demiserunt." Ibid. On the descriptive terms used here see below.

accounts of ostensibly non-hostile armies, we find that accusations of robbery, the theft of animals and destruction of property are common to most such incidents.[654] But arson, murder and the abduction of locals are not such familiar tropes, generally arising only in the context of deliberate raids by hostile forces, raising the implication that it was these practices that were seen to distinguish hostile from non-hostile forces in the eyes of contemporaries.[655]

Nevertheless, Gregory's deployment of similar terminology to describe the activities of hostile and ostensibly non-hostile armies, and the suggestion that they sometimes behaved identically, should not be lightly dismissed. As we have seen, Gregory did not reject the concept of war absolutely, specifically asserting the virtue of attacks against foreign enemies,[656] but his theoretical optimism about external campaigns is contradicted by his specific reports of those adventures, as armies returning from expeditions in Italy, Brittany and Septimania are accused of the same excesses as those engaged in civil war within Frankish territory.[657] Therefore it appears that the pessimistic impression of the conduct of armies given out by the *Histories* is more a product of experience than of ideological agendas, and should be taken seriously. There is a general sense that supply lines for the Frankish armies, if they existed at all, were inadequate, forcing them to rely on local populations for their sustenance. Almost every mention of the progress of armies is marked by the expropriation and plundering,[658] the question being not whether the local population will be looted, but how many other violent excesses the process will entail. On more than one occasion specific chronic breaches of discipline, leading to threats or punishments against dukes or counts, are referred to in royal armies.[659] Frankish forces also proved repeatedly unable to overwhelm or otherwise capture fortified towns on their foreign adventures in particular, implying that they were not repositories of technical expertise comparable to the armies of the Roman

654 For instance, Histories VII.12; VII.21; X.9
655 *Histories* IX.7, IX.25 for abduction and enslavement by foreign armies.
656 *Histories* V.Intro.
657 *Histories* VIII.30; IX.9
658 Which are not conceptually distinguished – see below, p. 193-195
659 *Histories* VI.31; VIII.30

Empire.[660] All this chimes with the impression established earlier of the late Roman armies, and their barbarian elements in particular, as more reliant on social culture, less on organization, training and camp discipline, for their military effectiveness.

How representative the extensive military experience of the Touraine – for which Gregory was best provided with information – was of the Frankish kingdoms in general is open to question. Attacks on the Tours region are evidently inordinately well-documented in the *Histories*, and there is internal evidence that this is not merely a result of the region being uniquely put-upon in the period: Gregory tells us how Saint Salvius redeemed many inhabitants of the Albi region who had been taken hostage by Duke Desiderius, but in his account of the campaign to which this passage is linked, it is the Touriane rather than the Albi region which is singled out as being victimized by Desiderius's forces.[661] Thus little can be said with confidence about how exposed the Touraine was relative to other areas, short of the basic geographical observation that Tours' centrality insulated it from non-Frankish raids from the Bretons or Goths, but also made it a focal point of the Franks' frequent civil wars. Tours might have been among the most frequently vicitmized regions in the kingdoms, but we have reason to suspect that its experience was more typical than its inordinate coverage in the *Histories* suggests, and that the frontier regions of the south, west and north were more completely devastated by the foreign armies by which they were assailed.[662]

The image of frequent military destruction, often resulting from inadequate supply lines and indiscipline, is complemented by the *Histories*' reports of violence and social disorder emerging in the context of changes of leadership or moments of uncertain authority, most spectacularly after king Chilperic's assassination in 484.[663] Gregory informs us that during the subsequent

660 For abortive attempts to capture fortified cities, see *Histories* VIII.30. X.3. The same is implied, though not explicitly stated, of Childebert's other attacks on Italy – *Histories* IX.25. The siege of Comminges, which in any case was ended by the surrender of the besieged army, is a rare exception.

661 *Histories* VII.1; probably referring to the aftermath of the campaign referred to at VI.31.

662 e.g. at *Histories* IX.7, 18, 25

663 *Histories* VII.15, 19; Wood (1994), p. 91; cf. Van Dam, R. "Merovingian Gaul and the Frankish conquests", in Fouracre (ed.) (2007), p. 220-221

interregnum, the local cities of Orleans and Blois fell into fighting with their neighbour, Chateaudun, in a conflict characterized by looting, arson, assaults, but not apparently by the abduction of people or the degree of killing associated with many larger-scale campaigns.[664] Atypically, no explicit explanations for this conflict are provided by Gregory, but it seems clear that it occurred against the will of the local counts, raising the prospect that local armies could mobilize themselves without the intervention of their appointed commanders. Nothing comparable to this incident is to be found in any of the subsequent sources covering Frankish warfare, and it seems safe to assume that word of this event would not have reached our ears had it not taken place down the road from Gregory's own see. But the incident presents the possibility that other such local wars, perhaps of considerable historical consequence, may have been deemed too insignificant to be included in the *Histories*.[665]

The death or replacement of local power-holders, particularly dukes and bishops, was potentially the occasion for similar outbursts on a more modest scale, and even a temporary lapse in authority could result in looting and other local violence.[666] On several occasions, Gregory reports royal appointees being forced to reckon with local groups, whose hostility is sometimes capable of effectively reversing appointments by force.[667] One of Gregory's rare detailed forays into social conflict below the level of regional authority figures implies that this could be true yet further down the political scale: the rumoured death of Sichar after his attack on Austrechild's relatives led to reprisals against his

664 *Histories*, VII.2; cf. Ausenda, G. "Current issues and future directions in the study of the Merovingian period", in Wood, I. (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge 1998), p. 392 (Loseby's comment)

665 See Halsall's comment in Ausenda (1998), p. 393. This will be taken up below.

666 For instance, *Histories* VI.7, 11, 38. See Geary (1988), p. 133, specifically in relation to the consequences of the capture of bishop Theodore of Marseille by Dynamius. The Council of Orleans (533, c.6) sought to address the problem of the looting of church possessions after a bishop's death by commanding that a *descriptio* of all church possessions should be made at such times; further measures against such looting in the early seventh century imply that the problem was intractable – see Halfond, G. I. *Archaeology of Frankish Church Councils, A.D. 511-768* (Leiden 2010), p. 119-120. *MGH Concilia* I (1893), p. 62.

667 *Histories* VIII.18; VIII.42. In a similar vein, the eviction of Bishop Quintianus from Rodez and his subsequent struggle to control the bishopric of Clermont in the face of local hostility are mentioned in *Lives of the Fathers* IV.1

ostensibly unprotected estates.[668] Former office-holders, like Leudast and Chuppa, one-time count of Chilperic's stables, were also apparently capable of remaining influential, and maintaining independent armed forces, after their official relegation to private life.[669] In a particularly interesting incident, Childeric the Saxon, exiled from Guntram's lands, crosses into the realm of his nephew Childebert, and is immediately made a duke by his new lord, with authority over a vast swathe of territory.[670]

A move such as Childeric's would be inconceivable if he did not bring with him into the service of his new lord many of the men by whom he had performed his duties as duke under Guntram. The impression is of an unstable and fluid political context, in which the functioning of ostensibly public power was based upon the private capacities for violence among the personal retinues of a king's elite subjects.[671] And this impression is reinforced by the frequent incidental references in the *Histories* to elite figures moving between regions and switching their loyalties between rulers. In relating how Siggo, keeper of Chilperic's privy seal, defected to the young Childebert in 575, Gregory informs us in passing that "quite a few of those who had emigrated from Sigibert's kingdom and joined Chilperic abandoned this latter king."[672] The original defections are not deemed worthy of note in and of themselves, implying that this was a quite ordinary and predictable process associated with the deaths of kings, and many signs of such activity are provided elsewhere. On over twenty occasions in the second half of the *Histories* we hear of men wandering between kingdoms, either for opportunity or to avoid the wrath of their sovereign.[673] And such wandering exiles, sometimes with their own retinues, could themselves become a source of disorder and violence in the lands to which they moved.[674] Indeed, the written pact of c.589 between Guntram and Childebert, recorded in full by Gregory,

668 *Histories* VII.47. In a similar (if much less violent) vein, the *Lives of the Fathers* (XIII.2) documents the disorderly scramble for the effects of the recently deceased St Lupicinus by his devotees.

669 *Histories* V.49; X.5

670 *Histories* VIII.18, 42

671 See Irsigler, F. "On the aristocratic character of early Frankish society", in Reuter, T. (ed.), *The Medieval Nobility* (Amsterdam 1978), p. 106-124

672 *Histories* V.3

673 For instance, after Chilperic's death, duke Beppolen enters the service of Guntram and is immediately appointed to govern several cities. (*Histories* VIII.42). See also, V.25, V.27, V.28, V.29, V.38, V.48-9, VI.45, VII.4, VII.32, VIII.44, X.9

made a point of prohibiting similar switches of loyalty by the *leudes* of the respective kings, suggesting that this was a widely recognized problem.[675] Such incidents suggest a political world in which the 'machinery of government', such as it was, struggled to operate independently of the private forces who were supposed to serve it, and the personal power of the individual leader – in terms of followers, charisma and physical vigour – was essential in holding together their territorial and legal domains.

These sudden moves and appointments to high office, over the heads of potential local candidates, would have been extraordinarily unlikely unless the men in question brought with them large and formidable private retinues.[676] But the elite figures portrayed in the *Histories* were also personally disposed to enter the fray, becoming active participants in, and victims of, contemporary violence. We should be careful not to exaggerate the evidence provided by Gregory of Tours for personal violence among the political elites of Francia, since (as we have seen) he shared with all narrative sources of the era a tendency to collapse groups into the person of their leader. When we hear, for instance, how Vedast, or Childeric the Saxon, or Chilperic's one-time treasurer Eberulf, were committing many crimes in the region of Tours,[677] it is probably safe to assume that other members of the groups which they respectively led were personally responsible for most of these offences. Even in the famous brawl between the men of Sichar and Austregisel, there can be no certainty as to the degree of their personal involvement.[678] Nonetheless, there are enough detailed accounts to show that such men took a personal hand in the perpetration of violence, military and non-military:[679] Former duke Guntram Boso kills his pursuer, duke Dragolen, in apparent single combat; duke Ursio personally cuts down several attackers before being brought low by fatigue; the royal *leude* Claudius personally sees to

674 *Histories* V.5 for the killer of Gregory's brother, who goes on to kill another man in exile. See also V.28-9 for the troublesome retirement of Leudast to the Bourges region.

675 Given the lack of comparable agreements from the period or testimony as to the impact of this one in practice, we have no way of knowing whether this represented a new and/or effective effort to prevent such changes of loyalty or the mere repetition of a familiar plaintiff trope. *Histories*, IX.20

676 This tendency was already evident in the late Roman Empire, see Chapter 2. For further discussion of these retinues, see below.

677 *Histories* VII.3, VIII.18, VII.21-2

678 *Histories* VII.47

679 For instance, *Histories* V.36; V.49; VI.14; VII.22; VII.29; VII.38; IX.12. See below.

the assassination of the former duke Eberulf, who proves quite able to defend himself.[680] And although Salonius and Sagittarius, the fighting bishops, look like the exception that proves the general rule restraining the higher clergy from such activities, the fact that they were able to resist demotion so effectively illustrates that even for churchmen, demonstrative personal violence could be reconciled with office-holding.[681]

All these incidents imply an upper elite with considerable personal experience and expertise not only of command, but also of combat. And the impression given by these many apocryphal examples is reinforced by the considerable attrition rate among the upper elite implied by the *Histories*. The deaths of kings and their family members may be discounted as too meagre and singular a sample to provide instruction, but the evidence for the most powerful non-royal figures, the dukes, may be more instructive. In the period 575-591, Gregory records the violent deaths of no less than nine dukes and former dukes, split more-or-less evenly between those occasioned in service to royal power and those resulting from rebellion against it.[682] Given that there were only a few dozen such figures at any one time, this represents an extraordinarily high casualty rate, more comparable to that expected in modern theatres of war than in peacetime even in the most violent present-day societies,[683] and of course there

680 *Histories*, V.25; IX.12; VII.29

681 *Histories* VIII.39. See below.

682 *Histories* V.25 (Dragolen); VII.29 (Eberulf); VIII.45 (Desiderius); IX.9 (Rauching); IX.12 (Ursio and Berthefried); IX.27 (Amalo); X.3 (Olo); X.9 (Beppolen). This does not include Dacolen, who died in captivity after being captured (V.25) or the Patrician Mummolus, who was not a duke but whose position was seemingly of analogous importance.

683 Accurate estimating the total number of dukes is not possible. The general tenor of Gregory's reports, which focus on the central and southern parts of the Frankish kingdoms, shows dukes presiding over two or more civitates at a time, implying not more than twenty or thirty in total. However, the highest number of dukes mentioned at once in the Histories comes in the context of Childebert's major invasion of Italy, which reportedly involved no less than twenty, suggesting that dukes were more densely distributed closer to the Rhine. Nonetheless the total number of serving dukes was probably not more than about sixty and most likely much fewer. (cf. Lewis, A. R. "The dukes in the *Regnum Francorum*, A.D. 551-751", in *Speculum* 51:3 (1976), p. 386). On the extremely liberal assumption that 200 men obtained the office of duke at some time during the period 575-591, this gives an annualized rate of violent death of 264 per 100,000. For comparison, the most violent modern peacetime society, Honduras, recorded murder rates of 86 per 100,000 in its worst year, 2011, falling to under 50 in 2019. (https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5?locations=HN). The rate of violent deaths in the field for active US army combatants during operation Iraqi Freedom (2003-2007) was 335 per 100,000, while the rate of combat deaths in Vietnam was much higher, at 1,818 per 100,000. See Goldberg, M.S. "Death and Injury rates of US military personnel in Iraq", in *Military Medicine* 175, 4:220 (2010)

is a strong chance that Gregory's account was incomplete. Bishops, whose deaths are more assiduously recorded in the *Histories*, seem to have been considerably safer, protected as they were by the sanctions of the Church and the sanctuary of the cathedral. But given Gregory's tendency to avoid scandalizing the Church, it is possible that this difference is overstated, and he admits to not giving an exhaustive account of episcopal deaths and successions.[684]

6.2 – "Violence" and "Warriors" in the *Histories*

The *Histories* thus provide considerable evidence for changes of allegiance and deaths among powerful figures, which can tell us much about the institutional capacity of the kingdoms to prevent outbursts of fighting and social disorder. But although the evidence is suggestive, the limitations of such an exercise are clear given the partiality of Gregory's coverage, and his relentless focus on the the most spectacular forms of violence and the upper elites of contemporary society. The real value of the *Histories* is more qualitative than quantitative, offering as it does a window into the mind of a participant in Frankish political and social life, and with it the promise of seeing something of the acts and attitudes of his contemporaries – including the warrior classes with whom we are centrally concerned – albeit 'through a glass darkly'. And his terminology – or, to use Foucaultian language, his discourse of violence and warriors – stands to reveal much about the differences between modern conceptions of violence and those of Gregory and his protagonists.

The nature of the relationship between Gregory's Latin and the languages and dialects spoken by his contemporaries in the warrior classes cannot be established with any precision.[685] That the language used by Gregory was not identical to that employed even by those warriors whose speech was predominantly Latinate, much less that of those who spoke primarily in dialects

684 *Histories* VIII.39. Gregory's hagiography makes occasional incidental references to violent ecclesiatical deaths: An abbot is slain "by the sword for reasons that remain obscure", in *Lives of the Fathers* X.2

685 For a good discussion and guide to the inconclusive historiography of this subject, see Hen, Y. *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: A.D. 481-751* (Leiden 1995), p. 21-29. He argues persuasively that the 'Vulgarist' position, which sees Latin as the spoken language of the Merovingian heartlands south of the Rhine until the eighth century, is the best supported.

based on the Germanic language of the early Franks, is to be assumed. But that his language would have been recognizable to secular contemporaries, the vast majority of whom were descended from the soldiers and citizens of the late empire, is equally certain. And given the political sensitivities discussed in the previous section, including Gregory's overt appeals to the better natures of the Frankish kings, we have reason to believe that his language was deliberately calibrated to account for the conceptual and moral sensibilities of contemporary warrior culture, even if it plainly did not blandly reflect them. Contextual analysis of the terms deployed by Gregory holds out the hope of discovering some of the instances in which unusual and tendentious uses of language reveal Gregory's personal, political and moral agendas.

6.2.1 – "Violence": *interficere*, *spoliare*, *adpraehendere*, *caedere*

The language of the *Histories* does not communicate any sense of a unitary concept of violence, but rather divides it into a wide array of terms that fall broadly into a few conceptual categories: lethal attacks; non-lethal attacks; robberies; and abductions. In general, killings are reported for their own sake, and are associated with elite political contexts, while non-lethal violence is reported incidentally in the course of other incidents, and is relatively taken for granted, other than in special cases or in respect of particular people. This basic hierarchical distinction is obviously familiar to the modern mind, but the connotations and interrelations of the various terms within these categories – which can be inferred from an analysis of the contexts in which they occur – present many interesting contrasts with the modern field of terms and assumptions. Most importantly, the terminology offered in the *Histories* frequently fails to distinguish clearly between what we would regard as official and unofficial, legitimate and illegitimate, even violent and non-violent, contexts, conceptually eliding various acts so as to blur the lines between them. And the *Histories* present considerable evidence that these conceptual saliencies were not merely matters of semantics, but actually manifested themselves practically in the ways that violence was done in the Frankish kingdoms.

The form of violence which most consistently concerns the *Histories* is killing, and this is described with a variety of terms, the most frequent of which are (in descending order) *interficio*, *interimo*, *intereo*, *homicidia* and their cognates. For chapter headings, Gregory prefers the apparently formal *interitu*, and a few other terms such as *nece* and *occidere* are employed occasionally.[686] Altogether the physically evocative *inter*-stem terms – which conjure images of cutting apart, making a hole, or 'un-making' a person – clearly dominate both Gregory's own descriptions and his accounts of reported speech. There are precedents for some of these terms in the Old Testament, but others, and the particular passive forms that frequently appear in the *Histories* do not occur often, or in some cases at all, in the Vulgate.[687] From the perspective of modern nomenclatures of violence, the striking thing about these terms, which are used interchangeably,[688] is the broad range of contexts in which they are employed, which appear to straddle the modern definitions by which violence is partitioned into morally and legally loaded categories.

At the most morally loaded end of the spectrum of contexts, the "inter-" terms are frequently used to describe what we would define as 'murder'. The chapter describing the slaying of the citizens of Tours Lupus and Ambrosius in their beds is entitled "De interfectis..."; Duke Dacolen is "interfectus" by Duke Dragolen after being promised his safety; in reported speech, bishop Praetextatus "fuerit interemptus...in aeclesia" on the orders of Fredegund; and Domnola, daughter of bishop Victorius is "interfecta" along with her entourage by an armed gang led by Bobolen.[689] In reported speech, too, we see the term employed to denote illigitimate and morally outrageous killing: in a report of written correspondence between kings, Chilperic states that "pater eius interfectus est"; Guntram accuses

686 *Obitus*, the other term for death preferred in Gregory's headings, is also occasionally used in referring to deaths resulting from physical assaults (e.g. *Histories* VI.11), but such instances are exceptional. Generally the term refers exclusively deaths from illness and old age, and will therefore not be discussed here. For a more detailed treatment of the *interitus*/*obitus* dichotomy and its probable moral significance, see Heinzelmann 2001, p. 125-143; and Shanzer 2002, p. 256-7

687 *Interimo* and *intereo* are found nowhere in the Vulgate. *Interficio* is does appear frequently (most often in the book of Kings and Prophets) but the passive singular form *interfectus* most often used by Gregory appears just three times.

688 Overtly at *Histories* V.17; VII.17; VII.47; VIII.5; VIII.18

689 "was killed...in church" *Histories* VI.13; V.25; VIII.5; IX.20; VIII.32. Lewis Thorpe translates all but one of these instances as "murder" (IX.20 is rendered "struck down").

Bishop Theodore of having his brother Chilperic "interfeci".[690] As some of these instances imply, these terms can also carry a sense of 'assassination' and 'ambush': a Saxon force allied to the Franks is caught by surprise in Breton territory and "maximam exinde partem interfecit"; the son of duke Beppolen, left at Rennes to secure his authority, "interemptus est cum multis honoratis viris" at the hands of the rebellious locals; and Guntram pleads with the people of Paris not to "interematur" him as they did his brothers.[691] And the *inter*-stems are used on occasion to express the intention to kill by some of Gregory's bêtes noires: in reported speech, Fredegund instructs clerics to "interemere" her enemies; and Eberulf, taking sanctuary in St Martin's, promises that Gregory will be "prius interfectum" if he is forced to come out.[692]

These instances convey a sense of terms which, although clearly much broader in their application than our modern terms – 'murder', 'assassination' or 'ambush' – nonetheless carry a clear set of negative connotations which seem to make those modern words the more-or-less appropriate translations. But further uses of these terms in the *Histories* add more complexity to any attempt to render them satisfactorily and consistently into English, extending them more into relatively legitimate contexts of collective violence and military activity, including instances where Gregory implicitly approves of the killings in question. The Breton prince Theuderic, for whom Gregory expresses some affection, "interemet" his rivals. Duke Desiderius "interfectus est cum his omnibus" after foolishly straying too close to Carcasonne on campaign. Two of the *pueri* of Chuppa are "interfectis" by locals after he raids the Tours region. Gregory sermonizes over the sorry fate of the early Franks, who, because of their disunity, "ab inimicis sunt interempti".[693]

And the range of the *inter*-stem terms for killing extends still further, into the realm of officially sanctioned executions. The kings Guntram and Childebert consult together and decide that Guntram Boso, in respect of his crimes, "ut interficeretur". In reported speech, Guntram scolds his indisciplined forces,

690 *Histories* VI.31; VIII.5
691 "was killed with many honourable men" - see below. Histories V.26; VIII.42; VII.8
692 *Histories* VII.22
693 "...they were killed by their enemies". *Histories* V.16; VIII.45; X.5; V.Preface.

warning that it will be an example to the whole army when “unus de prioribus fuerit interfectus”. And in a dream Gregory warns the king not to cause God to kill him (“interemere”) by violating the sanctuary of the church.[694] Thus the same words used to express illegitimate and morally repugnant killings – which would typically be described in modern parlance as ‘murder’ or ‘assassination’– are also used for those which might be regarded as expected and justified, including what would today be ordinarily described as ‘execution’. The terms are also used quite indiscriminately for killings that are spontaneous or pre-meditated, and without regard to whether they are done to helpless victims or in the context of fighting. Occasionally the adverb ‘clam’ (‘secretly’) is added to intensify an “inter-” stem term – most notably in the self-justification of Chramnesind after his fatal attack on Sichar – but such additions are exceptional.[695]

The morally vacuous terminology of lethal violence generally used by Gregory and his protagonists stands in contrast to his less regular, but still quite prominent, practice of describing killings as “homicidiis” and their perpetrators as “homicidas”. These terms are, to all appearances, just as morally loaded as their biblical and particularly New Testament precedents, which appear in the context Christ’s preaching against sinfulness. Where Gregory condemns his protagonists in absolute but vague terms, he invariably includes *homicidiis* among their crimes, in passages reminiscent of (though not identical to) one from the book of Matthew[696] - “...de corde enim exeunt cogitationes malae homicidia adulteria fornicationes furta falsa testimonia blasphemiae”. The abbot Dagulf, the bishops Salonius and Sagittarius, Duke Childeric the Saxon, the sons of Waddo and a number of other dead or exiled individuals to whom Gregory was evidently ill-disposed are accused of undefined *homicidiis* in addition to their other crimes.[697] The sacrilegious killings at the tomb of St Radegund during the dispute among the nuns at Poitiers, are described as *homicidia*.[698] And (possibly more controversially), Gregory reports that armies in Frankish territory,

694 “...one of the leaders were to be killed”. *Histories* IX.10; VIII.30; VII.22.
695 *Histories* VI.45; IX.9. Secrecy being a typical aggravating factor in determining the penalties for killings in *Lex Salica* (e.g. XLI.2, 4, 6)
696 “...from the heart of man come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, lies, and blasphemies”. Matthew 15:19
697 *Histories* X.21
698 *Histories* X.15

including royal ones, "homicidia tanta fecerunt" on several occasions.[699] The word *homicida* – "killer" – is also used in condemnatory terms, including in the reported speech of Gregory's contemporaries: count Nantinus describes the killers of his uncle, bishop Magnachar, as "homicidas illos"; messengers from Childebert implore Guntram to hand over the "homicidam" Fredegund; the killer of Praetextatus is a "crudelis homicida". In contrast to the "inter-" stem killing words, we never hear of laudable killings or their perpetrators being described in terms of "homicidas" or "homicidiis".[700]

The availability of a religiously charged and morally loaded terminology for describing killing raises the question of why Gregory – who as we have seen was clearly intent on moral instruction, even if he did not have a consistent moral agenda – so frequently preferred terms to which no apparent opprobrium was attached, even when describing killings that he clearly considered to be immoral and illegitimate. But detailed attention to the contexts in which the "homicid-" stem appears implies that its usage was somewhat confined. In reported speech, although we find several individuals describing their hated antagonists as "homicidas", on only one exceptional occasion do we find a specific killing described as a "homicidia".[701] More often, we find the term "homicidias" used to describe killings in the mouths of ecclesiastical figures: Salonius and Sagittarius are accused by a council of bishops of "homicidiis"; the hermit Hospicius condemns the Franks as "promptus homicidiis".[702] And as we have seen, Gregory reliably uses the term in condemning his most execrable characters, while describing their individually enumerated killings using "inter-" stems.

The suspicion arises, therefore, that this terminology is more characteristic of ecclesiastical circles than the secular society described in the *Histories*, as its prohibition under episcopal sanction at several Church councils of the sixth

699 *Histories* VI.31; VII.24; VII.39; VIII.30; X.3; X.9
700 *Histories* V.36; VII.7; VIII.31
701 The context is the reported speech of the Prefect of Carthage, referring to the killing of a merchant by a puer of one of Childebert's envoys. *Histories* X.2
702 "quick to kill". *Histories* VI.36

century suggests.[703] This is confirmed by the case of Salonius and Sagittarius, against whom their fellow bishops add a charge of treachery against the king to ensure their deposition, since their *homicidias* and *aduletrium* can be "purged by penance".[704] This is radically out of keeping with what we observe of the retaliations resulting from *inter*-stem killings, which are generally physical or pecuniary. The implication is that *homicidia* is a definition of killing *as sin*, whose use properly belongs to ecclesiastical contexts, rather than a practical definition suitable for use in more ordinary life.[705] And this conception of *homicidia* as a formal and ecclesiastical term not for use in ordinary descriptive speech is buttressed by the fact that it appears just three times in the first four books of the *Histories*, which describe more distant events.[706] This reflects interestingly on Gregory's attitude to illicit killings committed by warriors on campaign, which could not have been subject to the ordinary conventions of retribution and restitution that regulated social violence. But the appearance of *homicida* as a pejorative – roughly equivalent to our term "murderer" – in reported speech, implies that this term had penetrated common parlance. And there is some overlap between the contexts in which *homicidia* and *inter*- stem words appear, implying that had Gregory wished to do so, he could have used the former more liberally in describing the more obviously reprehensible killings that he recounts.[707]

Therefore the ecclesiastical connotations of *homicidia* do not fully explain why Gregory so frequently prefers the physically evocative, matter-of-fact terminology apparently preferred by his protagonists, even where the killings in question are clearly reprehensible by contemporary standards. But in fact

703 Orleans (511), 1; Epauna (517); Orleans (541), 28; and Macon (583), 7. The brief decree of Epauna is particularly telling - "De paenitentia *homicidarum, qui saeculi leges evaserint*, hoc summa reverentia de eis inter nos placuit observari, quod Anquiritani canonis decrevunt." Merovingian Church Councils (MGH Concilia I, 1893).

704 "per penitentiam purgari" - *Histories* V.27

705 This implication is circumstantially supported by a formula used by Gregory in describing the judgement on Austregesil's fatal attack on some of Sichar's *pueri*, where he states that it was decided that Austregesil "homicia erat et interfectis pueris". This would appear to be a somewhat clumsy formula, repeating as it does the idea that Austregesil was guilty of killing superfluously, unless we add the gloss that it served to enunciate the secular and ecclesiastical versions of the same idea. *Histories* VII.47

706 In contrast to the "inter-" stems, which appear more than twenty times in each book.

707 *Histories* VIII.30, where Guntrams troops commit "multa homicida" including killing clerics, "sacratas Deo aras interementes." The two terms also occur together at X.4, VII.47

homicidia and *inter*-stems are used in quite different ways which make it virtually impossible in most cases to substitute one form for the other. *Homicidia* is principally concerned with the perpetrator of violence and the abstracted act of killing. The grammatical construction of the concept, in which the killing itself is the direct object, makes it awkward to construct a sentence that emphasises the relationship between attacker and victim. And on the rare occasions where it is used in describing specific actions ("homicidium fecit") the term hardly ever refers specifically to a victim.[708] The *inter*-stems on the other hand, as the passive forms in which they frequently appear suggest, are used in a way that clearly identifies and emphasises the victim. Where they are used in active form, they take the victim rather than the act as the direct object, accentuating the relationship between victim and killer.[709] Gregory highlights this significant difference in usage in his report of the judgement against Austrechild after he kills several of Sichar's entourage, where he relates that the judgement was that Austrechild "homicida erat et interfectis pueris".[710] This statement repeats the same thought in two forms: the first principally concerning the act of violence and connoting the moral absolutism of the Gospels; the second focusing on the victims and deriving its moral connotations from their status and connections. This difference made the *inter*-stems fundamentally better adapted to describing killing in a retributive culture in which the allies and *parentes* of the victim were expected to take responsibility for seeking redress. And Gregory's tendency to prefer such terms is illustrative of his connection to, and desire to communicate with, a non-ecclesiastical social milieu.

Overall the impression is of a dominant nomenclature of killing – the *inter*-stems – that concertina our modern sub-categories and the moral and legal distinctions that they imply into an indistinct mass, such that a person would use the same word to describe the assassination of his relative as he would to describe the execution of convicted criminals or seditious soldiers.[711] The implication of this generic and distinctly un-technical terminology is that the

708 One exceptional instance occurs in the reported speech of Grippo, referring to the killing of his compatriots were killed in Africa - "qualiter homicidium factum est." *Histories* X.2
709 For instance, V.17; VI.10; VII.47. Vocative form, in reported speech, at VIII.28-29.
710 "was a killer and killed boys". *Histories* VII.47
711 Histories IX.10; VII.8; VIII.5

conceptual boundaries by which we abstractly partition killing into more or less justifiable acts were more ambiguous, vague and permeable for Gregory and his contemporaries. And the sense of common identity between acts that we would variously describe as murders, assassinations and executions comes through distinctly in a few passages which seem to defy categorization according to modern definitions: When duke Rauching's treachery is revealed to king Childebert, the duke is "interfectu" on the orders of the king, but rather than being captured and publicly executed as we might expect, the duke is tackled at the entrance to the king's chamber and hacked to death without warning before being flung naked from the window, in an act which seamlessly combines aspects of 'assassination' and 'execution'.[712] The presentation of the body after the fact looks very much like Chramnesind's self-justificatory hanging of Sichar's body on his fence-post after a legally dubious private killing, and calls to mind the provisions of the Lex Salica.[713] Later on we hear of "those who Fredegund ordered *interfeci*": the queen invites two feuding parties to dinner and has them suddenly killed in order to end what Gregory describes as a long-running and destructive cycle of violence. Once again there is a tension, to the modern mind, between the apparently public-spirited intention with which the killings are done and their informal and furtive character.[714] King Childebert is persuaded to send out men to pursue Fredegund, implying that the action was regarded as a crime, but the queen's ultimate escape again muddies the waters of legitimacy. As in so many cases, Gregory makes no comment on the morality of these incidents, and his condemnation of the victims in both cases implies that he saw nothing implicitly wrong in the distinctly informal manner of these killings.

The same informal and non-technical tone that appears in Gregory's descriptions of killing is evident in the language that he uses in describing non-lethal violence. Another decidedly broad terminology is that applied to forcible seizure of goods: *spolia* and *preada*.[715] These terms are both nouns and verbs, referring both to the process of forceful seizure of goods and to the seized goods

712 As well as "robbery" ("spolia") - See below. Histories IX.9
713 Histories IX.19; *Pactus* XLI.11a, 11b
714 Histories X.27. Yitzhak Hen (1995, p. 245) takes a different view of the Fredegund incident.
715 The former term (or the nearly identical "expolia") appears 39 times across the last six books of the *Histories*. "Praeda" appears 29 times.

themselves.[716] And the two terms are generally separated on the basis of scale. In general, individuals and small groups engage in *spolia*, while armies are responsible for *praeda*.[717] On two occasions, moderately large non-campaigning forces are described as engaging in both types of activity, and they are grouped together in Radegund's monastic foundation letter, implying a sense of continuity between the two.[718] *Spolia* is explicitly associated in many instances with personal effects of individuals, whereas *praeda* is more associated with the abduction of the victims themselves, but the two clearly overlap in relation to household wealth.[719]

In the case of *spolia* in particular we observe the same kind of ambiguities that appear in the use of the "inter-" terms. The word is deployed to describe both what we would call robberies – i.e. violent seizures with no legal justification or official sanction – and a range of more official actions which might be defined in the present day by such terms as "fine" or "expropriation", as well as a range of other acts which look more like what we would call "extortion", "swindling" or "fraud".[720] We might be tempted to believe that this is merely Gregory dramatizing the excesses of government, and in some cases – particularly regarding taxation of the Tours region – this would appear to be the case.[721] But the fact that Gregory can find no more innocuous verb in describing the appropriations of individuals who he evidently admires and against those who he despises undermines such a conclusion.[722]

716 The verbal form is dominant. "Spoliis" used as a noun in Histories V.49, VII.29, VIII.39. "Praeda" as noun at VI.31, VI.46, IX.7.

717 The rule is not absolute: locals in the Tours regions are "spoliatus" by Desiderius's troops after being captured (Histories VI.31); Goth forces in Septimania catch the Frankish army by surprise and "spoliatis interemerunt" (VIII.30)

718 Radegund's letter denounces "praedones et spoliatores pauperum". Histories, X.42

719 *Spolia* associated with personal effects, for instance in Histories V.25, where the dead body of Duke Dragolen is "spoliatum" by Guntram Boso; also V.38, VII.15, VII.28. Praeda explicitly associated with taking captives at Histories V.29, VI.31, VII.13, IX.7, IX.18, IX.24, X.3.

720 In the sense of "fine" or "expropriation" - Histories V.3, V.30, VII.15, VII.22, VIII.22. In the sense of "extorted" or "defrauded" - Histories V.49, VI.11, VII.45, VIII.39

721 Histories XI.30, X.7

722 As in the Emperor Tiberius "spoliavit" of the treasonous Empress Sophia's possessions (Histories V.30); and the seizure of the goods of the condemned former duke Eberulf, in which his house was "adplene spoliata" (Histories VII.22).

Mention of *spolia* does not always imply violence. When Merovech was "spoliatumque ab armis, datis custodibus, libere custodire praecipit"[723] by his father, we hardly picture a hold-up or disorderly mugging. But the threat of force is in every case imminent, and in several cases – as in the attack of the Poitevins against the camp followers from Tours in Guntram's army ("inruentibus, nonnulli interempti, plurimi vero spoliati redierunt")[724] – *spolia* is an unmistakably unofficial and violent process. In many instances, it is explicitly associated with forcible capture (adpraehen-), stripping (denud-), and other physical attacks (caes-/caed- etc).[725] Most instances of *spolia*, however, lie somewhere between these extremes in a way that sits uncomfortably within modern conceptual schema. The ambiguity of the term is neatly illustrated by the sorry fate of the princess Rigunth's baggage train en route to her planned marriage in Spain. Passing through the countryside, the massive entourage is responsible for "tanta spolia tantaque praeda". In the breakdown of political order following Chilperic's death, Rigunth herself is "expoliata" by duke Desiderius in Toulouse, according to the report given to Queen Fredegund by her servant Leunard. And, enraged by the news, Fredegund orders Leunard "spoliare" where he stands.[726] All three instances are pervaded by a sense of ambiguity over the degree of formality, legitimacy and violence involved. In every case, the perpetrators of *spolia* could claim some justification on the basis of legitimacy or authority, but equally, in every case the process itself feels distinctly informal and forceful.

This pervasive ambiguity makes many incidents in the *Histories* difficult to interpret in modern terms. When we hear the Bishop Badegisel was engaged in "spoliis civium", are we looking at robbery or extortion, physical abuse or the mere over-use of his ecclesiastical prerogatives?[727] When some clerics are "graviter caesi adque expoliati" as punishment for seditious writings, should we imagine an orderly "fine", as Lewis Thorpe would have it, or a physically brutal

723 "...ordered him to be *spolia* of his arms and guarded closely, in custody though not a prisoner". Histories V.3
724 Histories VII.28
725 Histories V.25; V.30; V.38; VI.31; VII.15; VII.25; VIII.22; VIII.30; VIII.40. For more on these other terms, see below.
726 Histories VI.45; VII.15; See below.
727 Histories VIII.39

on-the-spot stripping?[728] What the use of a single term for all these varied incidents implies is that such distinctions are anachronistic. For Gregory, there was no clear distinction between a "robbery" and an "expropriation". *Spolia* was the act of taking someone's personal belongings against their wishes, it ordinarily implied physical force, and – like the "inter-" terms for killing – it contained no implicit judgement on the objective legitimacy or justifiability of the act, which instead depended on the respective participants and their relationship with each-other.

Similar principles can be seen operating in the *Histories'* handling of abductions and arrests. Gregory deploys the same terms – *adpraehendo* and *abduco* – indiscriminately in describing the picking up of inanimate objects, the physical grabbing of one person by another, and various captures as well as rescues in all manner of contexts.[729] And again, the two terms are broadly (but not universally) partitioned according to scale, with the latter being broadly preferred in military contexts. At the smaller scale, no separate terminology serves to distinguish various acts either in terms of legitimacy, formality or morality: the boy prince Childebert is "adpraehensum" by duke Gundovald, to save him from death; after killing prince Merovech, Gailen is "adpraehensum" before being viciously mutilated; an invalid is "adpraehensum" by a priest, who drags him to a saint's house to be cured; Clotild's armed gang "adpraehendunt" the abbess of the nunnery of Poitiers, in the course of a brutal and illegal takeover; and a house is "adpraehensam" by fire.[730] Only two modifying adverbs – "fraudolenter" and "blande" – are ever deployed to qualify this term, suggesting that it was ordinarily expected to be open and forceful.[731] This does not mean that "adpraehen-" necessarily entailed physical coercion, but the

728 Histories VIII.22 / Thorpe, p. 454

729 "Adpraehen-" (or occasionally the synonymous "conpraehen-") appears 66 times in the last six books of the *Histories*, featuring prominently in books V-VII and becoming less frequent in books IX-X. "Abdu-" appears just 14 times, most frequently in the later books.

730 *Histories* V.1 (other examples of sense of 'rescued' at VII.1 and VII.29); V.18 (other examples of sense of 'arrested' at VI.24, VI.35, VIII.11); VI.6 (other examples of sense of physically 'grabbed' at IX.6, X.2); X.15 (other examples of sense of violently and illegitimately 'abducted' at VIII.33 (another example of sense of figuratively 'seized' at VI.33)

731 *Histories* V.25; VI.5

contexts in which “adpraehen-” appears are clearly dominated by explicitly forceful and violent incidents.[732]

This ambiguity between a sense of physical grabbing, legitimate arrest and forcible seizure again makes it difficult for the modern reader to interpret many of the “adpraehen-” incidents that Gregory recounts. An especially apt example is provided by the fate of Guntram Boso’s father-in-law Severus. After being accused of treachery, Severus sets out to see the king “cum magnis muneribus”; but, “in via adpraehensus et spoliatus atque in exilium deductus”.[733] Lewis Thorpe translates this as “on the road he was attacked and his gifts were stolen...”;[734] but we could as easily substitute, “on the road he was arrested and his gifts were confiscated” without going beyond the conceptual boundaries of the terms involved. The point is there is no way to distinguish these two ideas, and Gregory – like his contemporaries – apparently had no interest in doing so, as we would intuitively and automatically do in the modern world. In fact, the failure to make clear whether the assailants were bandits, rivals or royal officials implies that the Severus incident may be one occasion where Gregory is quite happy to play on the ambiguity of his terminology – which in this instance allows him to avoid explicit judgements on a possibly controversial incident – again deferring judgement to the audience and their various opinions of the victim.

The most basic, atomic elements of Gregory’s accounts of violence are the words he uses to describe blows and beatings – principally *verbera* and *caedes* and their derivatives.[735] These terms, which are constructed as verbs, participles and nouns alongside verbs like ‘adficio’, are again quite broad in their range of meanings. Verber- can be used to describe both lethal and non-lethal blows, depending on context;[736] and *caed-*/*caes-* is sometimes used to describe deaths in

732 Including two occasions where royal women appear as attackers and victims – *Histories* V.38; IX.34.
733 *Histories* V.25
734 Thorpe (1974), p. 290
735 *Verbero* and its cognates appear 18 times in the last six books of the *Histories*. The various forms of *caedo* are dominant, appearing 71 times in the last six books. *Adficio* and its cognates, which appear 23 times, is also sometimes used to describe beatings, but the vagueness of the term may disguise other acts of violence.
736 Lethal instances of “verber-” at *Histories* V.25; VI.32; VII.29.

fighting, particularly in the context of major battles.[737] This latter usage is particularly prominent in the early books of the *Histories*, completely dominating Book II, and may be the result of the influence of Sulpicius Alexander, who twice uses *caed-*/*caes-* to describe military carnage in the exerpts quoted by Gregory.[738] In the later books, however, the more mundane non-lethal meanings of *caed-*/*caes-* and *verber-* become increasingly dominant.

The tendency in the early books to use *caed-* terms to refer to violent death on a large scale, which occasionally resurfaces in the later chapters, can result in confusion over the whether attacks are deadly or not, since some incidents stand between the personal attacks that characterise the later books and the more classical military contexts that dominate Book II. But the non-lethal definition appears to be the one preferred by Gregory's perceived audience, for whose benefit he frequently seeks to make killings clear. In describing an attack on Frankish ships by the Goths, he states that "hominis caesi atque interfecti". Childebert's army in the Metz region commit "tantas preadas tantaque homicidia ac caedes". And when the condemned Duke Ursio sallies forth to inflict "tanta caede" on his assailants, Gregory adds that "quanti in eius contemplatione advenissent, nullus vivens remanere".[739] His apparent assumption that the audience will read "caed-" terms as non-lethal attacks for want of specific information is confirmed by the text of the bishops' judgement against the rebellious nuns at Poitiers, which uses "caede mactavit" in the sense of "beat up" in referring to attacks on the clergy.[740]

Caed- and *verber-* terms, used in the sense of non-lethal attacks and beatings, are understandably less frequent in the *Histories* than the "inter-" terms that describe killings, given Gregory's evident preference for spectacular and politically momentous events. In the first two books they are used on occasion in describing the suffering of the martyrs, but they are entirely absent from political history,

737 *Histories* II.3, 4, 9, 30, 33; III.7; IV.14-15, 42, 44; VI.42; IX.12, 25; X.9, 15, 31.
738 *Histories* II.9, where the relatively brief excerpt from Sulpicius three times uses "caed-" in this sense.
739 "of those who came into his sight, not one remained alive". *Histories* VIII.35, IX.12; similar at IX.25
740 *Histories* X.16

which concentrates on large-scale events.[741] As events approach Gregory's own time in book III, references to beatings begin to appear in political contexts, and the *caed-* and *verb-* stems emerge as virtually interchangeable terms for describing a wide array of non-lethal attacks.[742] These terms, used in this more mundane range of senses, become increasingly prominent as the narrative becomes more grounded in Gregory's personal knowledge from Book V onward, and are of particular interest in a study of contemporary violence, since their deployment is evidently not grounded in Gregory's literary influences so much as his experience and contemporary interests. The striking thing about these terms – and the range of non-lethal attacks that they indicate – is the extraordinary range of contexts in which they occur, which imply the social conventionality of 'percussive' behaviour. The most frequent and significant uses of "caed-/verber-" come in the context of discipline, punishment, interrogation and assaults. Predictably, these four categories often overlap, and they are associated with the same tools – "virgis et fustibus", or occasionally "pugnis et calcibus"[743] – but for the purposes of analysis it is useful to treat them separately.

Disciplinary and domestic beatings, broadly defined as beating directed against subordinates by their superiors in familial and other hierarchical contexts, can be glimpsed at all levels of society in the *Histories*. An abbot has a monk beaten, abbesses beat nuns, bishops and deacons beat their clergy, masters beat their *servi* and *pueri*, a count beats his *milites*, the earstwhile daughter of a noble family is beaten by the men sent to capture her, and even queens are not above dishing out a beating to disobedient children or step-children.[744] Some of the assailants in question are evidently despised by Gregory, and some of the victims have his sympathy, but where they do not, it is clear that he and his perceived audience are emphatically sanguine about the principle of 'teaching a lesson' in the sense of physical abuse. The bishop-saint Nicetius (who is credited with exceptional qualities of love and forgiveness), in his attempts to reform an

741 Abuse of early Christians with *caedes* and *verbera* at *Histories* I.34, 41, 48.
742 Terms used interchangeably at Histories III.28, 33; V.14, 49.
743 With "fustis" at Histories I.34, 41; IV.40; V.20, 48, 49; X.16. With "virgis" at X.19, 22. With both together at IV.46; V.49; VI.8. There are a couple of mentions of "loris duplicibus/triplicibus" ('double/triple thongs') in addition to the other more ordinary implements at V.49; VI.35; and X.19.
744 *Histories* IV.34; IV.26; V.49; IV.46; VII.46; VII.47; III.31; X.34.

adulterous deacon, “non solum a communione removerat, sed etiam *saepius* caedi praeceperat”. After death, the saint returns in a vision to punch another deacon in the throat for failing to speak the truth.[745]

When reporting the disciplinary beatings doled out by less savoury characters, Gregory almost invariably adds some intensifying term to distinguish the attacks from the kind of run-of-the-mill beatings of which he approves. In the only mention of spousal violence, the count Eulalius does not merely ‘knock about’ his wife as one translator would have it, but rather “gravissimis eam plagis saepius adficiebat.”[746] The merchant Christopher is hated by his *pueri* because “crebrius gravissime verberarentur”; Sichar beats his slave so badly as to wound him, “ictibus verberaret”;[747] and the educated upstart Andarchius beats his new servants so badly that “sangiunem elicuit”.[748] The first of these incidents helps to justify the victim’s illegal remarriage, and the other three culprits suffer violent retaliations by their victims, resulting in death in two cases and serious injury in the third. The implication is that Gregory at times used his editorial powers to emphasise the dangers of excessive disciplinary violence, and wished to warn men and masters off violence toward their women and servants that was too severe. But of disciplinary *caedes* and *verbera* that were not *gravissimus* he had no such cautionary tales.

Disciplinary and domestic contexts of *caed-*/*verber-* form an interesting sample, but are understandably infrequent, given their confinement to passing mentions in the course of more momentous sequences of events. Neither do they distinguish the post-Roman culture much from its Roman predecessor, where beatings were also a standard method of educational and hierarchal discipline.[749] Much more numerous are the uses of *caed-*/*verber-* in describing interrogations

745 “not only removed him from communion, but also had him frequently beaten”. In another passage, an anonymous monk who displays miraculous powers is beaten by his abbot as a precautionary measure against the sin of pride – *Histories* VI. The story is repeated in *Lives of the Fathers* VIII.5

746 *Histories* X.8 (the translation is from Thorpe 1974).

747 “Ictus” appears over a dozen times in the *Histories*, and carries the sense of a wound in particular, often in the context of fatal attacks. See for instance *Histories* VI.13, 32, 35; VII.3, 22, 29.

748 *Histories* VII.46-7; IV.46.

749 Kaster, R. *Guardians of the Language: the Grammarian and society in Late Antiquity* (1988), p. 17 n. 12

and punishments, which are often politically significant and even momentous in and of themselves.[750] *Caedes* and *verbera* appear as the principle method both in non-lethal punishment – where they are often proceeded by tying of the victim to "trocleas" or "stipites"[751] – and in torture. Indeed, although at times distinguished from other forms of torture – usually vaguely defined as other "suppliciis" – at other times torture seems to comprise little more than a severe extended beating, and "tortores" can be found dishing out the same beatings as "caesores".[752] Gregory offers one of his more evocative and personal moments in describing the punishment/interrogation of his rival Riculf after the commutation of his death sentence - "Nothing, not even metal, could bear such *verbera* as were done to this wretch… he was beaten with *fustibus*, *virgis et loris duplicibus*, not by one or two, but by as many as were able to get close to his wretched limbs."[753]

The evocation of a substantial crowd in this rare detailed description suggests that *caed-*/*verber-* beatings were highly social and public activities, although the reference to "not one or two" assailants implies that the attendant crowd were usually satisfied to witness rather than actively participate in the process. The further implication of the incident's context – a commuted death sentence – is that beatings could be considered a merciful alternative to more serious punishments. This implication is borne out by King Guntram's behaviour after an assassin is discovered waiting for him in a church at Chalon-sur-Saone. The several accused co-conspirators are hunted down and killed, but the would-be assassin himself is "verberatum plagis et dimisit vivum", since the king thought it wrong to kill a man taken in church.[754] At the harsher end of the spectrum, *caedes* and *verbera* appear repeatedly as warm-up acts for other punishments. We have already seen how *caedes* could precede *spolia*, how the two together

750 There are 15 instances of caed-/verber- in the sense of disciplinary and domestic violence. The terms are used in the sense of punishment and interrogation on 40 occasions.

751 "Trocleas" at Histories V.49; VI.35; VII.32. "Stipites" at IX.38; X.15. Roughly "pulleys" and "stakes". The former in particular suggests the existence of specialized equipment.

752 "Tormenta" and "verberibus" are distinguished from one-another at *Histories* VI.35, as are "caesi" and "supplicia" at VIII.11 and X.19. But "caedes" and "tormenta" are implicitly identified with one-another at VII.32; "tortures" are found dishing out "caedes" at VI.35. And beatings appear as the sole or principle form of torture at V.39; VIII.41; IX.38.

753 *Histories* V.49 – "Nam nulla res, nullum metallum tanta verbera potuit sustinere, sicut hic miserrimus…caedebatur fustibus, virgis ac loris duplicibus, et non ab uno vel duobus, sed quanti accedere circa miseros potuerunt artus, toti caesores erant."

754 "beaten with blows and released alive". *Histories* IX.3

could form the prelude to *exilio.*[755] The royal wet-nurse and her accomplice, Droctulf, are "vehementer ceasa" in advance of their mutilation and reduction to servitude for plotting against Queen Brunhild.[756] And in an account of the miraculous liberation of a condemned criminal, Gregory relates in passing that the criminal was gratuitously beaten prior to his planned execution.[757] He also reports with evident satisfaction that his *bete noire* Leudast was "pugnis calcibusque caesum" prior to his imprisonment for referring to slanders against queen Fredegund, and *caed-*/*verber-* terms appear in several other such sequences of punishments, being frequently associated with demotion from office.[758]

Caedes and *verbera* were thus so ordinary as to form an integral part of punishment and interrogation, even potentially when impending death made them superfluous. But they were also positively associated with hierarchy and as such could also be symbolic of demotion and putting perceived inferiors in their place. It is noteworthy that no duke – who as we saw appear to have commanded fully independent retinues – is ever beaten.[759] When accused of treason they are killed at the earliest opportunity without ceremony.[760] And in the one instance where Gregory persuades king Guntram to forgive dukes for their disloyalty, he uniquely resorts to the expedient of "vocans eos saepius vulpis ingeniosas", where a beating would surely be expected for lesser men.[761] But the recognition of the symbolic implications of *caedes* and *verbera* should not cause to us to ignore the impression of spontaneous and sometimes disorderly aggression that pervades Gregory's accounts. *Caedes* and *verbera* were, as we have seen, public and social activities that could involve multiple participants, and in several

755 *Histories* VIII.22; V.35.
756 *Histories* IX.38
757 *Histories* VI.8. Another superfluous beating prior to planned execution is detailed in Gregory's *Miracles of Saint Martin* I.21
758 *Histories* V.47, 49. Other beatings that appear to be synonymous with demotions at III.36; IV.43; V.14; VI.11; VII.27; VII.31; VIII.22; IX.38 and X.15.
759 The high-born Clotild's rebellion may also have been, in part, a reaction against such treatment at the hands of the abbess, who she claimed subjected her to - "famis, nuditatis, insuper et *caedis* se iam non ferre periculum" (*Histories* X.16)
760 *Histories* VII.38-9; IX.9,12. See above, n.711. A contrasting case is provided by duke Godin, who is demoted without apparent violence (V.3), but this comes in the context of his public disgrace on the battlefield, which would have drastically weakened his personal authority.
761 "frequently called them cunning foxes". Histories VIII.6; cf. Lex Salica XVII. 8, 10

instances, as in the revenge attacks on the former tax-collector Parthenius and the royal physician Marileif, they look distinctly informal and mob-handed.[762] The vagueness of the terminology, and examples like the beating of Riculf, suggest that neither Gregory nor his contemporaries were particularly concentrated on the difference between a disorderly assault and a formal punishment.

This sense of ambiguity comes through in Gregory's uses of *caedes* and *verbera* in describing non-lethal assaults. Gregory accuses Salonius and Sagittarius of *caedes* in addition to *homicidia*, *adulteria* and other unnamed "scelera", which would lead us to assume that in this instance the term is used in the sense of illicit assaults.[763] Similarly vague accusations are levelled at bishop Badegisel of Le Mans, former *maior domo* to king Chilperic, and the count of the stables, Pelagius.[764] But in their roles as ecclesiastical and royal officials, such men would have been entitled, potentially even expected, to be responsible for "caedes" in the sense of discipline and punishment. When king Guntram suspects bishop Theodore of disloyalty, "ira commotus", he sends men to bring the bishop before him, who precede to attack a religious precession, knocking the bishop from his horse and "clericos caedunt".[765] Although the bishop is cleared, the assault itself – which precedes the trial – looks integral to the process of apprehension. In each of these cases, there is a sense of continuity between what we would describe as official punishments, and less formal attacks aimed at putting erstwhile subjects and opponents in their place.

The presence of *sanguinem* in *caed-*/*verber-* incidents emerges as an important feature in scenes of non-lethal assault that Gregory wishes to paint as condemnable. The bishops Salonius and Sagittarius, quarrelling with their own citizens, "verberantes fustibus, usque ad effusionem sanguinis saeviebant"; the Goth queen, enraged at princess Ingund's refusal to convert to Arianism, "calcibus verberatam ac sanguine cruentatam iussit" in addition to other humiliations; and Amalo's *pueri* beat a free girl until blood pours from her nose.[766] In the rebellion at the nunnery of Poitiers, both Gregory himself and the

762 Histories III.36; V.14.
763 Histories V.20
764 Histories VIII.39; VIII.40.
765 Histories VI.11
766 Histories V.20, 38; IX.27

bishops' second judgement refer pointedly to the blood of "pontifices quam ministros" being shed by the nuns' agents.[767] Again, in the last of these two cases, the original offences contribute to the pretext for serious retaliatory violence. Thus, in a way reminiscent of, but not identical to, the Salic Laws,[768] the shedding of blood appears in the *Histories* as an important distinction between the kind of minor attack associated with ordinary regular discipline and the kind of serious attack associated with violent reprisals.

Overall, the range of contexts in which *caedes* and *verbera* appear as apparently conventional acts – in discipline, conflict, interrogation and punishment – imply that they were a normal and uncontroversial expedient in a wide array of scenarios, to the extent that were taken for granted by Gregory and his contemporaries as ordinary means by which hierarchy was enforced and wrongs were redressed. He protested when they were done to the undeserving or in excess, but had no general objection to non-blood-shedding attacks in a good cause. The centrality of this experience to contemporary life is alluded to by a Jewish scholar debating the divinity of Christ with Gregory, when he asks rhetorically how God could be subjected to those three indignities most fundamental to the human condition – "mulieri nasci, verberibus subdi, morte damnare".[769]

6.2.2 – "Warriors": *viri* and *pueri*

Just as Gregory's descriptions of violence rely on a nomenclature with many ambiguities and vagaries that confound attempts to categorize the incidents in question according to clear criteria of relative formality, legitimacy and spontaneity, his descriptions of the perpetrators of violence are not marked by precision or clarity. As we have already seen, warriors might be described with the vague pronoun "illi" or with a few other pronouns, but by far the most common word used to describe apparent members of the warrior elite is *viri* ('men'). Even this term is far from consistent in its application in the *Histories*,

767 Histories IX.41; X.16.
768 See Chapter 3, p. 135-9
769 Histories VI.5

since it can be used to describe all manner of men from slaves to kings, criminals or saints.[770] This is a result of the fact that *vir* is used in two modes. In its more simple form, the term is visually descriptive and conjugally oriented, often being found alongside *mulier* and referring indiscriminately to any and all members of the male sex.[771] By far the most dominant use of the term *vir*, however, is as a signifier of social position and is particularly associated with churchmen and warriors.[772] It is this latter bifurcated usage and it derivations that primarily concern us here.

The contemporaneity of the more elite definition of the term *vir* to Gregory's own time is attested by its use in reported speech, where it is repeatedly deployed by authority figures, including Gregory himself, when addressing their armed subjects in conciliatory terms. Queen Brunhild, standing between the warring factions of her son's kingdom, addresses them, "O viri..." in attempting to dissuade them from war. Fredegund does the same when trying to persuade the suspicious *Franci* of the legitimacy of her daughter's vast dowry, as does Guntram when he commends the young Childebert to the *exercitus*, proclaiming that his nephew "vir magnus effectus est".[773] This last statement hints at the importance of modifying adjectives in the use of the term *vir* in the *Histories*, but it is also clear that, in reported speech at least, the term has certain honorific properties without the need for any intensifying adjective. In fact in these instances it looks more like a formal term of respect than the overall impression of its use in the *Histories* suggests, raising the question of whether Gregory is freer in his use of the word *vir* in his writing that contemporaries would have been.

770 *Histories* V.3 (slave); VI.4 (king); X.15 (criminals); V.7, IV.6 (saints); VII.23 (Jewish merchants). But these cases, with the exception of saints, are highly unusual. See below.

771 For instance, *Histories* V.14; V.32; VI.12; VI.29; VII.40; VIII.18-19; VIII.39; IX.13; X.8. In total the term is used in this sense about twenty times in the last six books. See also, VI.36, in which a woman "mutate virili habitu" to disguise her identity.

772 For ecclesiastical figures, see for instance, Histories V.7, 10; VI.7-8; VIII.14; X.16. For armed secular figures, for instance, *Histories* V.Pref; V.14; VI.43; VII.29; VIII.30; IX.30-31; X.9. The term is used around twenty times to identify churchmen, and nearly fifty times to identify military leaders and other warriors.

773 *Histories* VI.4; VI.45; VII.33. Gregory's similar plea comes in the context of attempting to resolve Sichar's dispute with Austregisel (*Histories* VII.47).

Nonetheless it is worthy of note that neither Gregory, nor the elite figures whose speech he reports, make any attempt to distinguish fighting men with a more specific term, in particular *milites*, which is frequently employed by Sulpicius Alexander in the passages quoted in Book II, and is again used to describe contemporary imperial forces at Carthage by Gregory later in Book X.[774] This implies that the preferment of the more generic *viri* is a deliberate choice reflecting contemporary usage, and possibly even recognizing the distinction between the kind of paid professional military service that continued to characterize the sixth century empire and the customary arrangements that pertained to the Frankish kingdoms. But there is no way to know if Gregory was well-informed enough to comprehend this distinction, and it is more likely that his consistent refusal to identify armed men, other than those serving the empire, as "milites" was a convention inherited from the likes of Sulpicius Alexander rather than a deliberate choice informed by the conditions of their service.[775] Whatever the case, the result of this conventional and preponderant use of *vir* to describe armed freemen is twofold. First, the distinction between official and 'private' violence is further effaced. Second, the field of 'manhood' in the *Histories*, outside of the church, is entirely dominated by the warrior classes, such that it becomes synonymous with the profession of violence.[776]

The intimate association between the status of *vir* in secular society and retaliatory violence is attested by two parallel definitions of the term – the only two that appear in the *Histories* – attributed to king Guntram and the warrior Chramnesind. Guntram, justifying his determination to avenge himself on bishop Theodore, proclaims that if he fails to do so within the year he "ought no longer be held a *vir*".[777] The second incident – the denoument of the much-discussed 'feud' that revolved around the volatile teenager Sichar – is more thoroughly contextualised and, given its quotation of the inner thought process, more

774 *Histories* II.9; X.II

775 The opening book of the *Histories* does appear to communicate a vague sense that *viri* were morally superior to *milites*, quoting the Vulgate's mention of the Isrealites' heroic "virorum fortium", who led them out of captivity, as well as the scene in which the dying Christ is watched over "a militibus".

776 The conjugal and honorific senses are usually distinct, but the two occasionally overlap (for instance at VII.8), illustrating the potential for conflation.

777 *Histories* VIII.5

directly indicative of Gregory's perception of warrior psychology and the social values that conditioned its functioning. In a drunken joke at dinner, Sichar suggests that his killing of Chramnesind's family members was a lucky stroke, since the latter had been enriched by the resulting compensation. "But," Gregory informs us, "Chramnesind heard Sichar's word with a bitter heart and said within himself: 'Unless I avenge my kinsmen's death I ought to lose the name of *vir* and be called a weak *mulier*.'"[778]

This direct representation of the thoughts of a Frankish warrior is unique in the *Histories*, and we may wonder why Gregory chose this moment for such an unusual addition. In the first place the *prima facie* psychological credibility of the passage, which is strikingly reminiscent of some of the rationales offered by dangerously violent individuals in the modern age, is worthy of note.[779] As in those modern cases, the phrasing of the thought process ("I *should* lose the name of a man" rather than "I *will*...") implies that Chramnesind was not so much in fear of loss of reputation – as a strategic interpretation would infer – as he was spurred by his own fully internalized retaliatory psychology.[780] Indeed, the incident can be viewed as a textbook example of the concept of 'phantom community' – i.e. the collected attitudes of violent authority figures playing out in the mind of the perpetrator – offered by criminologist Lonnie Athens as a principle explanatory factor in many cases of strategically questionable reactive violence.[781] That Gregory could be capable of such psychological realism should not surprise us, given his proximity to the local figures about whom he spoke. His post-mortem description of Sichar implies that he was intimately familiar with this local notable, and it is possible that he was even more familiar with his killer. As we have seen, Gregory was rarely forthcoming about his personal relationships to the figures who appear in the *Histories*, and it is possible – given

778 "Haec ille audiens, amaro suscepit animo dicta Sichario dixitque in corde suo: 'Nisi ulciscar interitum parentum meorum, amittere nomen viri debeo et mulier infirma vocare'." - *Histories* IX.19

779 Athens, L. *Violent Criminal acts and actors revisited*, Chicago 1997, p. 55-6. For instance – "I'm a man, and I want to be treated like a man. Hell, I'm real easy to get along with as long as people don't take me too light… [but] …I've ruined more than one good man in my time, and Jack, I'll do it again too."

780 See Chapter 1, section 2. No other freemen were apparently present at the incident, although a few *pueri* were apparently in attendance. On these relatively lowly, though by no means necessarily unfree, figures, see below.

781 Athens (2003), p. 12-16

his personal involvement in the case – that his account of Chramnesind's thoughts were based on a personal account related directly to him or via king Childebert, to whom Chramnesind subsequently went to justify his actions.

The possibility that this incident offers us a direct window into warrior psychology is tantalizing, but is not essential to the psychological interest of the passage. More significant, given Gregory's flair for emphasising the cautionary and moral overtones of his stories, is the use of this assumed thought process as the plot device that seals the fate of Sichar. This killing was a source of considerable trouble for Chramnesind, who was the target of retaliatory measures by Queen Brunhild, but Gregory skips the details of this conflict, immediately informing us that Chramnesind was forgiven by the king and ultimately recovered his property. And in the post-mortem condemnation, it is Sichar who is framed as the deserving victim, reaping the rewards of his own drunken and belligerent behaviour. We have seen how Gregory was inclined to mix divine justice with mundane cautionary elements, as in the case of the priest Theodulf – for whom the ultimate justification of death was his evil ways, but the immediate cause of death was a drunken fall – and Sichar's death appears to follow the same pattern.[782] In this incident, the protagonist's ill-chosen words, and the predictable response of Chramnesind, become the mundane device by which divine justice is manifested. Therefore it seems likely that the thought process evoked by Gregory was a stereotypical one with which he expected his audience to be familiar and even sympathetic.

The status of "vir", then, was a gendered concept intimately associated with violence and revenge, as well as military service and elite status. And the words denoting manly qualities – *virtus* and *virilitas* – are clearly influenced by the same range of concepts. The latter term appears in relation to such qualities as procreative power or physical strength,[783] but is more frequently associated with courage and resilience in the face of violence. The pretender Gundovald's besieged army could, Gregory avers, have held out for years against Guntram's forces "si viriliter stetissent".[784] Women, in the face of violence, can also possess

782 *Histories* X.14. See previous section, n. 579-580
783 i.e. at *Histories* VI.26; VII.22; X.15
784 "if they had resisted like men" - *Histories* VII.24. See also, VI.41; X.4

this quality, and in fact Gregory most frequently uses it in referring to female acts of exceptional strength or courage: the princess Ingund, beaten and humiliated by her Goth stepmother, is said to have resisted conversion "viriliter"; queen Brunhild stands between two armies "viriliter" to prevent a battle; and a free girl kills the duke Amalo with an "ictu virili".[785] These incidents, in which women assume 'manly' qualities, serve to emphasise how deeply the concept of manhood was bound not just to the bearing of arms, but to physical and psychological resilience and defiance in the face of actual violence.

The other and more frequent cognate of manhood – *virtus* – is more jealously guarded by Gregory, who confines his use of the term assiduously to divine subjects, denying it to secular men and women alike. In the *Histories*, *virtus* is an index, above all, of miraculous power, to the point where "virtutes" can be straightforwardly translated as "miracles" or the power to effect them.[786] But the term frequently has strong overtones of divine revenge in particular, especially in reported speech: when a *puer* of the count of Bourges enters a property belonging to St Martin to punish a failure to attend the army, "protinus dolore percussus caecidit et graviter agere coepit."[787] The similarity to the language of beating discussed above is noteworthy, as is the repentant cry of the afflicted *puer* - "Nunc autem cognovi, quod magna est virtus eius."[788] Further instances of the use of "virtus" in reported speech suggest that Gregory's reservation of the term for divine figures was deliberate and tendentious, and that in secular mouths *virtus* had much less to with miracles and more to do with violence. The dukes Berthefried and Ursio, promising to destroy their sworn enemy Lupus, proclaim that "vivus virtute nostrae non evadit'.[789] Here, in the mouth of a member of the warrior elite, we see *virtus* stripped of its miraculous overtones and used in the more down to earth sense of violent power. And the one other reported use of the term emphatically confirms that this sense was in currency among Gregory's contemporaries: a cleric, paid to assassinate bishop Aetherius, miraculously falters at the moment of truth, explaining afterwards that as he raised his axe to

785 *Histories* V.38; VI.4; IX.27
786 *HistoriesV*.7; VI.6; VI.40; VII.10; IX.2, 4, 6.
787 "he was immediately beaten by blows of pain and was badly affected". *Histories* VII.42
788 "Now I understand how great his *virtus* is."
789 "His life will not escape our *virtus*" – *Histories* VI.4

strike, his eyes blurred and "manus absque virtute erant".[790] These examples are only a tiny proportion of the uses of *virtus* in the *Histories*, but they are dominant among the much smaller sample of the use of the word in reported speech.

Comparing the *Histories* to *Lex Salica*, there is a clear sense of identity between the secular *vir* – with its connotations of military service, private violence and elite status – and the *ingenuus* that dominates the legal landscape in the Frankish laws.[791] But the *Histories* imply a vague but definite sense of further stratification that is not present in the simple tripartite division into free barbarian, Roman and slave attested in *Lex Salica*. Again, it is difficult to pin these terms down with any precision, partly because there is, again, ambiguity between descriptive and honorific uses. When, for instance, Gregory tells us that the "robustioris [sic] viri" advanced to Comminges while the rest of the army crossed the torrid river Garrone,[792] is he referring to a special elite category of warrior, or merely identifying the stronger men who were able to swim across first? We might be inclined, at a glance, to assume the latter, but in other instances such physically evocative modifying adjectives give the distinct impression of having an honorific meaning. In some cases – for instance when Gregory mentions the *viri fortissimi* who accompany Merovech and Desiderius – the term feels more like a signifier of elite status.[793] Certainly the *viri fortissimi* who Mummolus identifies as awaiting the pretender Gundovald outside the walls of Comminges include such figures as dukes and other, more vaguely defined, military leaders.[794] And there is no doubt that when Gregory mentions *viri nobili*, *viri optimi* and *viri maginifici*, he is referring to powerful political figures.[795]

Further down the social spectrum, Gregory repeatedly uses the term *pueri* to describe dependent, low status warriors. The word *puer* is occasionally used to describe children, but in most cases it is abundantly clear that the term denotes grown men who are quite capable of taking on *viri* and undertaking missions of

790 "[my] hand was without *virtus*" – *Histories* VI.36
791 As it does in the Burgundian laws. See Heather (2011), p. 138
792 *Histories* VII.35
793 *Histories* V.18; VII.9
794 *Histories* VII.38
795 *Histories* VI.45; VIII.9; IX.18; X.8.

the utmost importance.[796] Indeed, although they remain consistently anonymous, *pueri* feature as key players in a number of the most detailed and interesting incidents of violence reported by Gregory, several of which are dominated by them. The legal status of *pueri* is unclear, and unlike the *viri* who dominate the *Histories*, they are not well represented in the Salic Laws. But a few references in the Laws to "half free" *leti* and *liberti* would seem to be strong candidates for the legal category which the *pueri* occupied. A key passage in *Lex Salica* prohibits the liberation of *leti* and *servi* alike by a freeman who is not their lord, but only in the case of the *letus* is this potential offence placed in a military context.[797] A passage in a later capitulary casts this implication into doubt, protecting *pueri* of the king (who were almost certainly more important than ordinary *pueri*) with the same wergeld as a *libertus*, one hundred *solidi*.[798] But in one manuscript non-royal *pueri* are ranked alongside *leti*, *liberti* and *Romani* for the purposes of composition.[799]

The conclusion of some historians, that the *pueri* were servile, is supported by some passages in which they are treated with apparent disdain by their superiors, as in case of Rauching and the merchant Christopher.[800] Gregory, however, rigorously distinguishes between the *pueri*, who are almost invariably found surrounding powerful individuals and bearing arms, and *servi*, who are never described as armed or present during fights, although they are the victims of

796 The few instances where *puer* is used in the sense of "child" - *Histories* VI.35 ("*puerolus*"); VIII.29; VIII.34. *Pueri* getting the better of *viri* at V.48, VI.32, VII.3, VII.29, and VII.46 (the second last of these incidents, in which the former duke Eberulf is grabbed by a "*puer...qui erat robustior*", is especially instructive). Edward James offers some useful information on the multiple uses of *puer* in Justinian's *Digest* (where it can describe slaves, boys or merely children), and illustrates that in his hagiography, Gregory generally distinguishes pre-pubescant children with the diminutives "puerolus" or "puer parvolus". James also takes the view that the armed *pueri* of the *Histories* were assumed to be *adolescentes* between fourteen and twenty-five years old. Nothing in the *Histories* supports this theory, but there does seem to be a link between the status of *puer* and the early phase of a warrior's career (see below) – James, "Childhood and youth in the early middle ages", in Goldberg, P. J. P. & Riddy, F. *Youth in the middle ages* (York 2004), p. 16

797 *Pactus* XXVI.1-2

798 *Pactus Capit.* V.cxvii

799 *Pactus* XLII.4 (Manuscript A1)

800 Ibid.; Bachrach, B. S. "Merovingian armies and paid soldiers in imperial perspective", in France, J. (ed.) *Mercenaries and paid men: the mercenary identity in the middle ages* (Leiden 2008), p. 182-3; Halsall 2003, p.49 (who dissents from this view, see below). *Histories* V.3; VII.46. The servility of *pueri* is frequently an implicit assumption in Thorpe's translation, where in many instances *puer* and *servi* alike are rendered as "servant" (e.g. p. 410, 427-8, 547).

attacks on property.[801] In Sichar's conflict with Austregisel, the killing of *pueri* is taken seriously – first by Sichar and then in the judgement of the court – in a way that finds no parallel for *servi*, and when one of Childeric the Saxon's *pueri* runs the *vir* Avius through with a spear, his master makes composition but no punishment is apparently meted out to the culprit.[802] Thus the *pueri* stood, literally and figuratively, in a closer relationship to their masters than *servi*, acting as bodyguards, representatives and assassins. And as such they occupied a social position, or rather a spectrum of positions, between the *viri* and the unarmed *servi*, and their status was defined by their close familial ties to their masters.[803]

Although *pueri* are not always mentioned in the small-scale incidents reported by Gregory, they are found at some point or other in the company of every kind of notable, whether secular or ecclesiastical. Kings, queens and dukes have *pueri* who they send on official missions from gathering taxes to arresting fugitives.[804] They also accompany bishops and form the private retinues of former royal officials and other *viri* of private means, including merchants and prominent Jewish subjects of king Guntram.[805] In the rebellion at the nunnery of Poitiers, *pueri* appear in the service of the abbess and one of her erstwhile noble nuns, Basina, when a *puer* of the latter is killed in an altercation, fuelling the ongoing dispute.[806] But in all these instances the *pueri* are never the focus of Gregory's prose, only coming into view as extensions of their more important superiors, especially where they become the perpetrators and victims of violence.[807] While they occupy considerably more of the *Histories'* attentions than the *servi*,

801 For instance, *Histories* VII.47
802 *Histories* VII.47; VII.3.
803 See Halsall (2003), p. 48-50, for a discussion of the appearance of *pueri* in *Lex Salica* and 7th-century hagiography. In the former the *pueri regis* are identified with counts, which militates against identifying them with the *pueri* referred to by Gregory. Bachrach (1972, p. 51) similarly identifies those *pueri* described by the *Histories* as working for royals with the *pueri regis* of the *Lex Salica*, but Gregory seldom makes use of this more exalted term or seeks to distinguish royal *pueri* with with any other terminology.
804 *Histories* V.14 (duke Guntram Boso); V.18, VI.32 (Fredegund); V.48 (duke Berulf); VI.2 (Chilperic); VII.42 (count of Bourges); IX.9 (Childebert & duke Rauching);
805 *Histories* VI.17 (Jewish merchant Phatyr); VII.3 (Childeric the Saxon); VII.29 (royal servant Claudius); VII.46 (merchant Christopher); IX.19 (Sichar); X.2 (royal envoy Grippo); X.5 (Chuppa, former count of Chilperic's stables); X.14 (bishop Audioveus of Angers).
806 *Histories* X.15
807 See also *Histories* VI.17, VI.32, VII.29, VII.46, VIII.41, X.2.

Gregory is absolutely uninterested in them as individuals, and there is a sense that they are taken for granted in a way analogous to the other typical accoutrements of elite warriors: when Salonius and Sagittarius are forced into a monastery, their transition from armed to unarmed life is marked by the loss of "tam equos quam pueros" in addition to their other possessions, neither of which were mentioned in the vague accounts of their many excesses.[808] Thus, like *equi*, we have cause to suspect that the *pueri* were more ubiquitous than their infrequent appearances in the *Histories* implies, and they may have been more numerous than the *viri* who dominate Gregory's attentions. On a rare occasion when he does give a number of *pueri* in the company of a powerful figure, Gregory states that the newly appointed royal official, Andarchius, travelled with "septem pueri tantum", implying that exalted figures would be expected to be accompanied by considerably larger entourages.[809]

Thanks to Gregory's evident lack of interest in non-elite figures, what we see of *pueri* is confined, even more than our impression of elite *viri*, to the spectacular. But we are at least provided with a wide array of contexts and incidents that indicate the range of duties, opportunities and hazards to which these figures were exposed. In elaborating on the evil character of Rauching, Gregory reveals that it was customary for a *puer* to hold a candle at his master's table to illuminate his dinner, as a prelude to his accusation that Rauching would force his *puer* to hold the candle between his shins until the flame burned his skin - "...If he uttered a sound or tried to escape, Rauching threatened him with a naked sword, revelling with great pleasure in the *puer*'s weeping."[810] Given Gregory's evident hatred of Rauching, it is likely that this scene, like the merchant Christopher's "crebrius gravissime" beatings of his *pueri*,[811] was supposed to exemplify behaviour that was reprehensible, or at the very least excessive. These incidents illustrate the exceptional proximity and trust between

808 *Histories* V.20

809 *Histories* IV.46. This broadly reflects the Salian provisions on abductions, which envisage up to nine followers in addition to the principle offender – *Pactus* XIII

810 "Nam si ante eum, ut adsolet, convivio utenti puer cereum tenuisset, nudari eius tibias faciebat atque tamdiu in his cereum comprimi, donec lumine privaretur; iterum cum inluminatus fuisset, similiter faciebat, usque dum totae tibiae famuli tenentes exurirentur. Quod si vocem emittere aut se de loco illo alia in parte movere conatus fuisset, nudus ilico gladius imminibat, fiebatque, ut, hoc flente, iste magna laetitia exultaret." *Histories* V.3

811 See above, p. 200

pueri and their patrons, of which there are several other examples, and hint at the conventional limits of maltreatment. Indeed, the divinely ordained punishment of those who wantonly mistreat their *pueri* is a theme that appears three times in the *Histories*, constituting a small but significant trope.[812] But such incidents also throw into relief the exceptional exposure of the *pueri* – who were always close at hand and expected to be physically and psychologically robust – to the violence and aggression of their masters. The death of the merchant Christopher at the hands of his abused *pueri* highlights the risks of such abuse, but their subsequent capture and condemnation to death also implies that short of virtually suicidal rebellion, there was little or nothing a *puer* could do to avoid the arbitrary power of a violent patron.

The exposure to violence experienced by *pueri* was not, of course, limited to victimization at the hands of their superiors. Much more frequently in the *Histories*, they appear as participants in public conflicts, and are frequently on the receiving end of the worst consequences of those conflicts.[813] The violence of the *pueri* is often deployed explicitly on behalf of their patrons, but on several occasions they exhibit a high degree of agency, which goes beyond the better judgement of their ostensible leaders. We have seen how the famous Tours 'feud' was sparked by an attack of one *puer* upon another, without apparent permission from his master, and how several *pueri* of Childeric the Saxon killed Vedast after an exchange of insults, necessitating a compensatory payment.[814] And further signs of the agency and volatility of these figures appears when a *puer* of one of Childebert's ambassadors in Carthage first snatches an item from a merchant's stall, and then kills the merchant when confronted over the theft, setting in motion a chain of events that results in the deaths of several nobles and lasting enmity between Childebert and the empire.[815]

812 In addition to the above examples, Theodulf's fatal fall, which is precipitated by a drunken attempt to punch a *puer* in the back of the head – *Histories* X.14. Cf. VIII.41 (on which more below).

813 For instance, *Histories* V.14; VI.17; VI.32; VII.29; X.2

814 See above.

815 "...unus puerorum, Euanti scilicet, qui cum eodem abierat, direptam speciem de manu cuiusdam negutiatoris metato detulit. Quem ille prosecutus cuius res erant, reddi sibi rem propriam flagitabat. Sed isto differente, cum de die in diem hoc iurgium in maius propagaretur, quadam die negutiator puerum illum in platea repperit, adpraehensumque vestimento eius, tenere coepit, dicens, quia: 'Non a me laxaberis, priusquam res, quas violenter deripuisti, meae dicione restituas'. At ille excutere se de eius manibus conatus, non

The *pueri* are only ever glimpsed in the more detailed, small-scale incidents of violence that appear in the *Histories*, and are never mentioned in the context of large-scale warfare. However, this does not mean that they did not participate, and it may well be that Gregory subsumes them into the broad category of *viri* in the same way he so frequently subsumes followers into the person of their leader for literary convenience.[816] When, for instance, Claudius rides ahead of his three hundred *viri* to assassinate Eberulf, it rapidly becomes clear that he is surrounded by previously unmentioned *pueri*, raising the question of how many of the aforementioned *viri* were in fact *pueri*, or had *pueri* of their own.[817] Nonetheless, it is significant that the *pueri* are so consistently associated with small-scale violence rather than warfare, and the implication is that – in line with Vegetius's psychologically sound principle that soldiers must be prepared for the rigours of battle through minor skirmishes – the status of *puer* may have implied a preparatory phase in the life of a warrior, at the end of which stood the status of *vir* and its associated rights and (direct) military obligations.[818] From this perspective, it is no coincidence that the concept of male youth is dominated by the term *puer* in the sense of junior warrior, just as the concept of manhood is dominated by the term *vir* in the sense of warrior in general. As such this conceptual category is of considerable importance in understanding how military preparedness was achieved without official training and camp discipline in the Frankish kingdoms.

---

dubitavit erepto gladio hominem trucidare" *Histories* X.2, 4. Another (non-contemporary) example of spontaneous fighting between volatile *pueri* appears in Gregory's hagiography – "...medio e vulgo commoventur pueri duo in scandalum, nudatoque unus gladio, alterum appetit trucidandum." (*The Suffering of St Julian*, 5)

816 See Chapter 5.

817 *Histories* VII.29

818 The provision of *Lex Salica*, prohibiting *ingenui* from freeing the *leati* of their fellow freemen (XXVI.1), implies that statuses between full freemen and slavery were already recognized, although they may have been less important, at the end of the fifth century. Halsall (1998a, p.156-7; 2003, p.49-50), noting that furnished male graves from the Frankish kingdoms are generally not provided with goods before the age of about twenty, reaches similar conclusions. He also persuasively links the *pueri* to the *contubernia* mentioned in *Lex Salica* as being involved in housebreakings and kidnappings, although his further suggestion – that armies were divided by age group – cannot be verified.

Given the *Histories'* episodic structure and focus on elites, evidence for social mobility at the level of the *pueri* is understandably meagre, but what little there is suggests a strong link between the commission of violence and advancement to elite status. In a particularly revealing passage, Fredegund, accused of the killing of her enemy, bishop Praetextatus, has a *puer* seized and beaten over the incident; he is sent for interrogation at the hands of Praetextatus' nephew, and under duress reportedly makes the following confession before being cut to pieces: "'I received a hundred gold pieces from queen Fredegund for what I did. From bishop Melanius I received another fifty and from the archdeacon of the city fifty more. In addition to this, I had a promise to them that I should be given my freedom and that my wife, too, should be freed'."[819] There are several layers of interest in this incident, which brings into relief the potential rewards and punishments associated with the violence of *pueri*, as well as highlighting the tension between subordination and agency that characterized the relationship between *pueri* and their masters.

First, the grand total of the sums supposedly promised to the *puer* – two hundred solidi – is worthy of note for its symbolic importance in the *Lex Salica*, where it represents the *wergeld* of a free man.[820] By connecting each violent act to a specific numerical value, the Salic Laws may thus have set the standard not only for seeking redress for those acts, but also for ascribing positive values to their commission.[821] To borrow the language of modern finance, the 'liability' value ascribed to this act of violence in the Laws also framed conceptions of its 'asset' value. In other words, if killing a free man will cost two hundred solidi in respect of those people who do not want to see it happen (i.e. his allies and relatives), it might also command two hundred solidi in respect of those who do wish to see it happen (i.e. his enemies). The same logic can be seen operating tacitly in the compensation paid by Childeric on behalf of his *puer* in respect of the killing of Avius, a man to whom he was evidently hostile.[822]

819 "'A regina enim Fredegunde centum solidus accepi, ut hoc facerem, a Melantio vero episcopo quinquaginta et ab archediacono civitates alios quinquaginta; insuper et promissum habui, ut *ingenuus* fierem, sicut et uxor mea'." *Histories* VIII.41. The reference to a wife circumstantially undermines the case for assuming that *pueri* would be *adolescentes*.
820 *Pactus*, XLI.1
821 See Chapter 4.
822 *Histories* VII.3

The second, more general implication of the incident is the relationship between violence and social progress to which it points. For the first and only time in the *Histories*, we see a clear example – albeit an idiosyncratic one – of what it could take to make the leap from *puer* status to full freedom. This chimes with the more widely attested and generally recognized connection between military violence and political advancement of which the *Histories* presents several examples.[823] The link between military service and potential freedom is well established.[824] But the *puer*'s reward for the killing of Praetextatus illustrates – in line with what we have seen of Gregory's literary partitioning of *pueri* from military violence – that 'private' violence on behalf of the powerful could equally be integral to social climbing, and potentially that such private violence might be an ordinary preliminary to involvement in the military violence that was the proper domain of *viri*.

The third point of interest of the Fredegund incident consists in the implied underlying controversy over the question of Fredegund's personal responsibility for the slaying of Praetextatus, and the issues of agency and volatility among the *pueri* that it raises. There can be little doubt that Fredegund would have told a different story about the death of Praetextatus to that offered by Gregory, for while his version of events makes emphatically clear her culpability, the reaction of the murdered bishop's nephew and his supporters, who were apparently satisfied with the dismemberment of the *puer* ostensibly commissioned to do the deed, implies that another version of events was accepted in practice. And – given that Fredegund herself brought the accusation against her own *puer* – this story might have had more in common with the most famous medieval incident of bishop-slaying, the twelfth-century martyrdom of Thomas Becket, than the narrative preferred by Gregory.[825] In other words, Fredegund would presumably have argued that the *puer* had over-interpreted her evident hostility to Praetextatus, just as Henry II's knights arguably did six centuries later in respect

823 For instance, *Histories*, VIII.29

824 See Chapter 2; Chapter 4, and below.

825 Warren, W. L. *Henry II* (Berkeley 1973), p. 508-510 - "Whether Henry actually spoke the famous words 'Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest', there is no means of knowing… That he uttered some such words is, however, beyond doubt, for Henry himself later admitted responsibility, although disclaiming any intention of wishing to procure the archbishop's death."

of Becket, and taken it upon himself to demonstrate his *virtus* (in the sense conveyed in reported speech rather than the sense preferred by Gregory himself) without waiting for explicit orders.

Both versions of events – the one given by Gregory, which tends to view the *puer* as the instrument of Fredegund's will, and the other, implicit version, that evidently attributed independent agency to the *puer* – are credible, but it is significant that contemporaries were apparently more inclined to believe the latter. This chimes with the impression given out by the apparently independent and wilful behaviour of the *pueri* of Austregisel, Childeric the Saxon, Childebert's ambassadors in Carthage, and of course the merchant Christopher, who were all apparently capable of unexpected and unwarranted moments of violence that went far beyond the will of their patrons. All of these incidents suggest that *pueri* – predictably given our discussion of the behavioural effects of exposure to violence – could be prone to aggressive volatility that at times escaped the boundaries imposed by convention, authority and even strategic self-interest. They also suggest that as long as those excesses were directed at the enemies of their patrons, or socially unimportant figures, they could be tolerated and even defended by the *pueri*'s overlords, although the denunciation of Fredegund's *puer* illustrates the risks of putting one's master in hot water. Thus, the aggressive volatility of the *pueri* was by no means systematically discouraged. On the contrary, such excesses might have been integral to the building of reputation for violent *virtus* and *virilitas* that could make the *puer* worthy of elevation to the status of *vir*.

In considering the warrior culture of the Frankish kingdoms from the perspective of psychological and behavioural conditioning, the close relationship between *pueri* and senior members of the (primarily warrior) elite, their exposure to the violence and demands for violence of that elite, and their evident volatility, may be fundamental in understanding the constant (re-)generation of military preparedness by social means. The relationship facilitated not only the practice of violence in a controlled (relative to the battlefield) environment, but also the vital psychological conditioning – the "toughening up" process – that (re-)generated the aggressive and potentially volatile behavioural profiles so

essential for combat enthusiasm.[826] Through the lens of strategic analysis that sees violence as directed toward socio-economic advancement, the various ill-conceived acts of violence attributed to the *pueri*, which evidently brought considerable trouble to all concerned, seem aberrant. But from the perspective of behavioural conditioning, they can be viewed as predictable by-products of, and episodes in, the violent socialization processes by which innately empathetic individuals were transformed into fully formed *viri*. That is, into men who would not be alarmed by the horrors of battle, and who could could fight and kill without hesitation or compunction.

The probable ubiquity of *pueri* serving as agents and bodyguards of exalted figures raises the question of Gregory's own retinue of armed men (*viri*/*pueri*), who are never mentioned overtly, much less described as being involved in violence or even acting on his behalf in some other capacity. It is hardly credible that the bishop of Tours uniquely walked alone amid the dangerous retinues of his exalted contemporaries, but given his aversion to making the *Histories* biographical, and his self-presentation as a righteous prophet,[827] it is unsurprising that these figures remain anonymous. Nonetheless, in line with our previous observation that Gregory was inclined to efface violence to avoid scandal, it is worth considering the possibility that his own *pueri* are at times deliberately excluded from the incidents that relate to himself and his domains.

Particular suspicion arises in relation to Gregory's extensive account of the violence at St Martins that led to the deaths not only of the fugitive Eberulf, but also the royal servant sent to kill or capture him – Claudius – and many of the *pueri* of both men.[828] Prefacing the incident, Gregory tells us, by way of explanation for his absence from the scene, that he was away at the time, visiting a local country estate.[829] He also accuses Claudius of acting not only on royal

826 Simon, D. & Burns, E. *The Corner: A year in the life of an inner-city neighbourhood* (New York 1997), p. 234-5. See Chapter 1, section 2.
827 Heinzelmann (2001), p. 36-59
828 Histories VII.29.
829 "...cum nos in villam quasi milia triginta ab urbe commoraremur..." The convenience of this ostensible coincidence has been pointed out by more than one historian – Brown (2002), p. 21; Heinzelmann (2001), p. 58, n. 40

orders, but also secretly accepting payment from Fredegund to ensure that Eberulf died. These facts, and an extensive condemnation of Eberulf's character that details some of his misdeeds and the personal animus he felt toward Gregory, set the scene for the disorderly massacre of fugitives and royal allies alike. Claudius, we are informed, attacked Eberulf, mortally wounding him and being mortally wounded himself in the process. With Eberulf dead, the stricken Claudius and his *pueri* took refuge inside the Abbot's cell, where the *pueri* of Eberulf found them and restarted the fighting. But the dramatic intervention of a third party – certain "inergumini ac diversi egeni" armed only with stones and sticks – resulted in the total slaughter of both parties. Leaving the naked bodies of their victims outside, these anonymous "Percussores vero nocte sequenti, adpraehensis spoliis, fuga dilabuntur," never to be seen again.

The scene, despite its unique evocation of "inergumini ac diversi egeni" (who apparently begged in the vicinity of Tours cathedral) as effective killers, capable of taking on the fully armed *pueri* in the retinues of elite warriors, nonetheless has a certain *prima facie* credibility. Gregory's tendency to only introduce lesser figures into his narrative where they become involved in momentous violence is already well observed, and it is quite possible that this is an example of the same habit. In the chaos of a disorderly skirmish between two hostile factions inside the precincts of Tours cathedral the *pueri* of both sides would have been exceptionally vulnerable to attack. As Michael Burrows has pointed out, Gregory surely had access to plentiful detailed information about the incident, and it is likely that his version of events would have been broadly credible to contemporaries.[830] As such, his account offers a tantalizing glimpse into the perceived restiveness and dangerousness of an otherwise unknown and unarmed mass of urban indigents.[831]

830 Burrows, M. "Gregory of Tours, political criticism and lower-class violence", in Wood, I et al (ed.), *Mirabilia* 18 (2014), p. 38-44.

831 Sulpicius Severus also noted the presence of such *inergumini* in the vicinity of St Martin's, crying out for relief from their possession, but did not apparently consider them to be physically dangerous - Grey, "Demonaics and Dissent, and Disempowerment in the Late Roman West: Some Case Studies from the Hagiographical Literatures", in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 13.1 (2005), p. 42, citing Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues*, 2.3

However, several aspects of the circumstances of this report make the incident it purports to describe an especially strong candidate for self-interested distortion on Gregory's part. King Guntram's allies were massacred in Gregory's own cathedral, a slaughter that could have put the bishop under threat of retaliation were he judged to be responsible.[832] "King Guntram," Gregory remarks dryly, "was furious at what had happened, but he calmed down when he learned the full details".[833] We also know that Claudius and his *pueri* formed the advance guard of a force of three hundred men (many of whom presumably had personal ties of loyalty to him) who would have arrived at Tours shortly after the incident looking for an explanation for the carnage.[834] These conditions beg the question: would Gregory have admitted it if his own *viri* and *pueri* had been partially responsible for the slaughter? Could he have done so without risk to his own position or the lives of his followers? Or might he instead have stolen away to a nearby country residence with the guilty individuals, and claimed ignorance of the whole messy affair?

Some other features of the incident seem to militate toward this more pessimistic interpretation. First, despite his dramatic denunciations of the fugitive Eberulf, Gregory makes no effort to disguise his disgust at Claudius's attempt to kill him by deceit within the sanctuary of St Martins, or his delight at the slaughter of Claudius and his *pueri.*: "The vengeance of God was not slow to fall on those who had defiled his holy house with blood", he proclaims with evident satisfaction, "but the wrongdoing of Eberulf, whom St Martin had permitted to endure all this, was certainly very great."[835] Of course, Gregory's own reverence for the sanctity of St Martin's makes it unlikely that he would personally order a spate of killings within its precincts, but we have already seen how he sanctioned an assault on the occupants of the nunnery of Poitiers. And given what we have seen of the agency and volatility of the *pueri* who served elite figures, killings need not have been the result of specific orders. Gregory

832 We have already seen the violent humiliation of bishop Theodore at the hands of Guntram's men above – *Histories* VI.11

833 *Histories* VII.29

834 Claudius's body was apparently collected by his "parentes". (ibid)

835 "Adfuit autem Dei ultio de praesenti super eos, qui beatum atrium humano sanguine polluerunt. Sed nec eius facenus parvum esse censetur, quem talia beatus antestis perferre permisit."

was certainly more than willing to celebrate the slaughter, after the fact. Furthermore, the virtually superfluous effort of depositing the despoiled bodies of Claudius and his *pueri* outside the cathedral after the killings looks distinctly like the kind of behaviour observed among elite figures, like Chramnesind and Childebert, elsewhere in the *Histories* in respect of their slain enemies.[836] It may seem contradictory to simultaneously advertise a killing and to deny it publicly, but we have already observed other probable instances of such behaviour in Fredegund's handling of the Praetextatus affair, and Brunhild's dealings with Abbot Lupentius and his killer, Count Innocentius.[837]

All this returns us to the thorny issue of Gregory's own attitude to violence, as an author and – as the tendentious sequence of events discussed above throws into sharper relief – as a powerful figure with extensive political involvements, domains and armed followers. The argument that Gregory systematically overstated violence for moral purposes having been undermined, the question that now arises is whether the bishop systematically downplayed the violence of his own strangely anonymous and invisible followers for political purposes, or due to a desire to preserve his own reputation in the eyes of posterity. No firm answer can be obtained, but we have already seen how Gregory admired the sudden and apparently spontaneous violence of bishop Aurelius's *viri strenui* against a wandering preacher, and even demanded violence in respect of Clotild's "evil-doers, fornicators and fugitives" (themselves probably *viri* and *pueri*).[838] It would therefore be remiss to neglect the possibility that if we had an account of Gregory's activities from a hostile perspective, he may have looked less like an Old Testament prophet,[839] and more like the elite figures he execrates for complicity in the violence of their retinues.

836 Histories IX.19
837 See above, and Chapter 5.
838 See Chapter 5
839 Heinzelmann (2001), p. 140-143

6.3 – Violently Socialised Individuals in the Histories

So far we have analysed the *Histories* primarily in order to improve our understanding of the norms and expectations regarding violence and warriors, and the process of violent socialization. But we have also seen considerable evidence of violence that goes beyond those norms and expectations, becoming strategically questionable, excessive and 'maladaptive'.[840] This aspect of violence has been almost absolutely ignored in recent historiography, which has inclined decisively toward explanations of violence that emphasise its social functions and strategic value.[841] But in psychological perspective, such evidence of inappropriate violence should be taken seriously on a case-by-case basis as a potential opportunity to observe the behavioural and psychological pathologies of the Frankish warrior elite.

The psychological perspective also tells us that the causes of maladaptive violence must be sought as much in the past experiences of its perpetrators as in social expectations or strategic motivations. This is particularly problematic in the study of early medieval sources, since most violent characters appear as fully formed adults, before disappearing just as quickly. There is nothing resembling a detailed 'life course' biography of any individual from the period, that might allow us to look in detail at the relationship between their experiences and their subsequent violent actions. But the *Histories* do in fact offer a few fascinating reflections – some incidental, others deliberate – on the relationship of past experience to present behaviour in this respect. And as such they present a rare opportunity to contextualize the violence of at least a few individuals in their past experiences.

However, any such deductive conclusions, based as they are on partial information (in every sense), necessarily only represent one potential version of events. But a further perspective through which aspects of the psychology of violence in the Frankish kingdoms may be sought is Gregory's moral register, which as we have seen extends to a recurrent concern with the violent excesses of his contemporaries. The *Histories* are full of salutary tales for monks, priests,

840 That is, maladaptive to contemporary society rather than our own. See Chapter 1, section 2.
841 Dailey (2015, p. 158-9) acknowledges this point without pursuing it.

counts and kings, many of which did not fit comfortably into any grand schema, but rather addressed individual aspects of contemporary sinfulness, such as excessive consumption of alcohol, false oaths, or the violation of the sanctuary of the Church. But they also show a recurrent interest in acts of what modern psychologists would describe as pathological or maladaptive violence, and in doing so they shine a light on Gregory's sense of the pathologies that most troubled contemporary society. In other words, even where we suspect that the information regarding violence in the *Histories* is deliberately selected, emphasised, exaggerated or distorted for narrative effect, the character of these emphases and exaggerations can tell us much about Gregory's sense of the kinds of violence that demanded his moral intervention, and the pathologies that drove them.

Therefore this section will consider the theme of learned maladaptive aggression among Gregory's contemporaries, and his appreciation of the phenomenon. For these purposes, four case studies, focusing on characters about whom some sense of behavioural development can be gleaned (that is, individuals who appear more than once in Gregory's narrative, and about whom some informative biographical information is provided) will be considered. These are Leudast, the former count of Tours; the sons of the former royal chamberlain, Waddo; the queen Fredegund; and the Breton monk Winnoch.

Leudast, Count of Tours

Leudast, whose exploits have come up repeatedly in the course of our analysis of the *Histories*, is one of the characters for whom we are best provided with biographical information by Gregory, including – almost uniquely – some reference to his childhood.[842] Plainly, Gregory despised this low-born upstart, who for years had thrown his weight around in his bishopric. And the fact of Leudast's lack of influential family, who might protect his reputation posthumously, freed Gregory to add the kind of lurid detail to his characterization of the former count that we rarely find in respect of still-

842 *Histories* V.47, 48, 49; VI.32

influential figures. This makes Gregory's unsympathetic portrayal tendentious, especially when it comes to his personal dealings with Leudast, but it equally liberates the biography from the kind of self-censorship that applied to Gregory's accounts of himself and such figures as Childebert and Brunhild. Given that Leudast was count in Gregory's jurisdiction, and even attended St Martins, we can at least be certain that the information on which the *Histories* account was based was detailed and partly derived from personal experience. As importantly, Leudast could act as a template of condemnable behaviour and its evil consequences, through which Gregory could communicate his moral concerns to others who held secular office as he wrote the *Histories*, including the anonymous man who held the countship of Tours.

According to Gregory, Leudast was *turgidum rixis*,[843] and flew into rages when sitting in judgement on his citizens, having clerics and officials beaten altogether too readily for Gregory's taste. In other words, Leudast was described as exhibiting heightened aggression and emotion dysregulation, with specific references to incidents of reactive aggression.[844] We are also informed, in Gregory's typically vague style, that Leudast was guilty of "tantamque utebatur crudelitatem, ut vix referri possit". We have already seen how the evil bishops, Salonius and Sagittarius, were accused of attacking their own flocks in the course of disputes, and similar charges were levelled at the mayor-turned-bishop, Badegisel. As such Gregory's accusations against Leudast may be generically indicative of his concerns about the excessive violence of those in positions of political power, which, as we have seen, the laws did nothing to prevent.

But a more idiosyncratic detail opens up a sense of the process by which Leudast might have acquired his reputed violent inclinations. In an observation that is both precise and verifiable by contemporaries, Leudast is said, after a period in exile and subsequent (unexplained) reinstatement, to have walked into church fully armed and armoured, "de nullo securus, quia omnia erat

843 *Rixae*, in keeping with the salient features of Gregory's nomenclature, can be understood broadly as disputes, but with connotations of physical violence.

844 Comparison of Leudast's reported behaviour with the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire is suggestive - Buss, A. H., & Perry, M. "The Aggression Questionnaire" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63 (1992), p. 452-459"

adversus."[845] Although, clearly, churches were not necessarily safe places even for the great and good, Gregory's hyperbolic claim – that Leudast had no allies in Tours – is untenable. In psychological perspective, the more realistic explanation for the unusual habit of wearing armour even in relatively safe environments is that Leudast was displaying symptoms of the kind of hostile attribution biases, heightened threat perception, and hyper-vigilance associated with past experiences of violence, and exacerbated by the evident insecurity of Leudast's position.[846] This may in fact have been what Gregory meant with the phrase "omnia erat adversus": not that Leudast was regarded as an enemy by all, but that he regarded all as potential enemies. And there are some signs in Gregory's account that Leudast's progress to the countship had been marked by experiences of violence, both as victim and aggressor.

As a slave in the royal kitchens and bakery of an unnamed monarch, we find out that Leudast was an unusually spirited youth.[847] His repeated escape attempts, which presumably could not be remedied by the ordinary expedient of *caedes* and *verbera*, eventually resulted in his mutilation – "auris unius incisione multatur". This act was apparently designed to make him clearly identifiable as an escapee, raising the possibility that it was a customary form of mutilation that calls to mind the provisions of Lex Salica.[848] Subsequently, Leudast was adopted in spite of his mark by queen Marcovefa, somehow earning the important role of custodian of some of her best horses. After this vaguely described promotion, Leudast disappears from view, only to re-emerge as count of Tours without any explicit indication of the mechanisms by which this became possible. But the count's actions after falling from royal favour are instructive: rather than petitioning Chilperic directly, Leudast "asked the army to intercede for him with Chilperic and gain him an audience. They all gave him their support and the king

845 *Histories* V.48. For an attempt to unpick the details of Leudast's political involvements, see Van Dam, R. *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*, (Princeton 1993), p. 256-8

846 Chen, P., Coccaro, E. F. & Jacobson, K. C. "Hostile Attributional Bias, Negative Emotional Responding, and Aggression in Adults: Moderating Effects of Gender and Impulsivity, in *Aggressive Behaviour* 38:1 (Jan-Feb 2012), p. 47-63; Dodge, K.A. & Somberg, D. R. "Hostile attributional biases among aggressive boys are exacerbated under conditions of threats to the self", in *Child Development* 58:1 (Feb 1987), p. 213-224

847 *Histories* V.48

848 See Chapter 4, section 3.

agreed to see him."[849] The clear implication is that Leudast had, in the course of his rise to the countship, distinguished himself by military service, and had subsequently proved an effective commander of the Tours levies as count, evoking a familiar picture of advancement of the unfree or semi-free *puer* to the status of *vir* through the successful commission of violence on behalf of the powerful. In the process of this astronomical rise, Leudast had also apparently won armed allies, and possibly enemies, in the Bourges region, to whom he fled when he lost his political struggle against Gregory.[850]

The sketchy picture of Leudast's life thus obtained takes us beyond Gregory's moral agenda, hinting at a process of violent socialization that helps us to understand his reported aggression and vigilance as count. A period of brutalization in the formative phase of adolescence was complemented by subsequent demands for the performance of violence, in a sequence very much reminiscent of that described by criminologist Lonnie Athens in relation to the creation of intractably violent behavioural profiles.[851] Thus, instead of seeing Leudast's reported aggressive and vigilant behaviour solely as outcomes of strategic decision-making, or as equally strategic propaganda by which Gregory sought to calumniate his adversary, the possibility opens up that the journey of this man from slave to count, and specifically the experiences of violence both as victim and perpetrator entailed in this process, had more-or-less permanently disposed him to aggression, reactive violence, vigilance and hostile attribution biases.

The Sons of Waddo

Other than Leudast, there is only other instance in the *Histories* in which the actions of adult warriors are contextualised by some direct reference to their childhood experience. This is the story of the anonymous sons of another of

849 *Histories* VI.32
850 *Histories* V.49
851 Athens, L. "Violentization in larger social context", in Athens, L. & Ullmer, J. T. (eds.) *Violent acts and violentization: assessing, applying, and developing Lonnie Athens' theories* (Oxford 2003), p. 8-18

Gregory's more disreputable characters, one-time count of Saints, Waddo.[852] These men, who were active in the Poitiers region, were apparently known to Gregory more by reputation than as a result of personal contact.[853] But the involvement of their father in the disastrous sojourn of Rigunth's doomed baggage train and the subsequent failed rebellion of Gundovald drew them into Gregory's sphere of interest. What little we know of their lives as a result is clearly embellished for dramatic effect, but nonetheless again throws issues of psychological development under violent social conditions into relief.

Waddo, who was major-domo to the pricess Rigunth at the time of her betrothal, was clearly held in contempt by Gregory for what he saw as the opportunistic plundering of Rigunth's rich dowry en route to Spain and subsequent support for the pretender Gundovald. He was one of that generation of famous traitors to the Frankish royal family – alongside duke Desiderius, the patrician Mummolus, and bishop Sagittarius – who Gregory was at pains to portray as ultimately suffering divine punishment in respect of their crimes and general moral turpitude. Like Desiderius, and unlike Mummolus and Sagittarius, Waddo somehow escaped death in respect of his part in the rebellion, but he eventually met a bad end in an attempt to seize control of a country estate in the course of a legal dispute.[854] Sometime later we find his sons engaged in a career of violent banditry in the Poitiers region which, unfortunately for them, results in the death of a royal official. They come to the king bearing treasures – presumably by way of compensation – but are tortured and condemned to death and exile.[855]

This tragic sequence of events lends itself readily to religious-moral interpretation. The death and exile of Waddo's sons, who are tortured into revealing the location of his stolen treasure, calls to mind the biblical passages, "the wages of sin...", and "the sins of the father shall be visited on his sons..."[856] But strategically, the resort to banditry of these young men defies ready

852 *Histories* VII.28, 38, 39; IX.35; X.21
853 Although Gregory's failure to name the sons may be the result of affectation rather than ignorance, as in the case of the killer of his brother, Peter (*Histories* V.5).
854 *Histories* IX.34
855 *Histories* X.21
856 Romans VI.23; Exodus XX.5

explanation. Why, if the sons of Waddo had access to a rich cache of treasure, presumably including a quantity of coin in addition to its more unique and readily identifiable items, would they set about violently robbing wealthy passers-by at the risk of their own considerable fortunes, and indeed their lives? Surely for able men of substance, there were other courses of action available? The psychological perspective suggests that the causes of their behaviour may be productively sought in their prior experiences, and in this case we are lucky to be provided with some highly suggestive vignettes from the young lives of these doomed men.

The first mention of Waddo's sons sees them being abandoned by their father in his escape from the forces of Guntram outside the walls of Comminges.[857] It is not made clear whether this was a formal act of hostage-giving or the mere side-effect of disorderly flight from impending death,[858] but the latter is implied. Whatever the case, the young boys were left in the custody of an army that was especially volatile and violent, implicated as it was in indiscriminate slaughter both within Comminges and on the journey home, and presumably psychologically distressed by their difficult campaign.[859] Gregory tells us nothing about how the boys were treated, but given Waddo's disgrace and removal from royal protection, his children were hardly protected from the aggression of their captors.

The second appearance of Waddo's boys finds them reunited with their father, and becomes the occasion for another idiosyncratic piece of scene setting by Gregory. In a unique evocation of social interaction between father and child in the household, Gregory casts both wife and child as Cassandras to Waddo's Priam:

> "...she said to him, 'Don't go, dearest husband! You will be killed if you do! Then I and my children will be left destitute"…One of the boys

857 *Histories* VII.38-39

858 "Igitur Leudeghyselus rediens ad castra cum Mummolo et Sagittario, Chariulfo vel Waddone, nuntios occulte ad regem diregit, quid de his fieri vellit. At ille capitali eos iussit finire sententiam. Waddo tunc cum Chariulfo, relictis filiis obsedibus, discesserunt ab eis." - *Histories* VII.39

859 The large army suffered from internal dissension between the regional units and raided widely and violently, both before and after the massacre at Comminges – *Histories* VII.38

said: ‘If you go, father, we shall die! You will leave my mother a widow and my brothers orphans!’ No matter what they said, they could not dissuade Waddo. He flew into a mad rage with his son, upbraiding him as a coward and a weakling, throwing an axe at him and nearly killing him. The boy jumped to one side and avoided the blow.”[860]

Sure enough, having ignored the pleas of his wife and son, Waddo attacks the bailiff of the estate and is felled by a spear thrown by the son of the (possibly accidentally) slain man. “Waddo’s son, who was sobbing his heart out, put him on a horse and carried him back home”, where he died.[861]

The preliminary household scene, like the one between Sichar and Chramnesind discussed earlier, is unusually intimate, but carries more hallmarks of dramatic device, and we have much less reason to believe that Gregory had uniquely privileged information in this case. Although it is of course quite likely that other, unmentioned characters who might have later passed on the details to Gregory were present, the conclusion that the scene was crafted in hindsight to intensify the impact of subsequent, more public and verifiable events, is difficult to resist. The authorial resort to a hyperbolic example of parental brutality – the near-fatal axe attack – fits comfortably with our previous observation that conventional hierarchical beatings were insufficient to inspire moral outrage among the *Histories*’ intended audience.[862]

The scene is thus in all probability a crude stereotype that tells us more about Gregory’s assumptions about life in a warrior household than providing any specific information. Nonetheless, Gregory’s evocation of violently negative parental reaction to perceived cowardice – here equated with the desire to avoid conflict – in a male child, which is not matched by a similar reaction to the virtually identical pleas of Waddo’s wife, is instructive. It gives us a glimpse of the dynamics of the warrior household as Gregory perceived it, and from psychological perspective it provides a credible insight into the social

860 Perhaps opportunistically given the recent death of the owner, Beretrude. This is another potential example of the tendency for the deaths of powerful figures to become the occasion for violent disorder observed above.
861 *Histories* IX.35
862 See above, section 2.1

mechanisms by which such conflict aversion was ironed out of the young men who would one day be expected to fight on behalf of the household and the army.[863]

In psychological perspective, these factors in the lives of Waddo's sons – their capture by a hostile army, their treatment in the household at the hands of an aggressively volatile father, and the witnessing of his violent death – are all worthy of consideration in reflecting on their subsequent, strategically inept, career of violent banditry. Such experiences frequently play into the developmental trajectory of behaviour, making future aggression and volatility more likely.[864] And the killings of important and well-connected figures in which they were subsequently implicated were, in part, manifestations of the behavioural trajectories of these young men. After the disgrace of their father, Waddo's sons may no longer have been welcome in the army, but the lack of legitimate opportunities for violence was evidently insufficient to fundamentally alter their behavioural inclinations. And the fact that, having discovered that they were wanted, the young men voluntarily presented themselves to the king with rich gifts, suggests that their condemnation for these criminal actions was not a foregone conclusion. On this occasion, the potential *utilitas* of these men to the king was outweighed by the desire to avenge his tribune and the prospect of discovering Waddo's treasure, providing Gregory the opportunity to use these young men for the moral instruction of his contemporaries. But again, the implication is that able men of aggressive dispositions could be useful to the powerful, even if that aggression was sometimes misdirected.

Fredegund

No other character in the *Histories* so spectacularly illustrates the potential of elite women to psychologically adapt to, and effectively participate in, the violence of Frankish political and social life, than queen Fredegund.[865] She is personally implicated in more individually enumerated killings, beatings, and

863 Athens (2003), p. 9, citing Simon & Burns (1997), p. 205-6.
864 See Chapter 1, section 2
865 Gradowicz-Pancer (2002) p. 1-2; Dailey 2015, p. 118-140

mutilations, than any other individual in the *Histories*, but there is also no one for whom the evidence is so complicated by their political career, social origins, gender, and relationship to Gregory himself. As a former serving-woman, the widow of the "Nero and Herod of our time", and – most importantly – the mortal enemy of Childebert and Brunhild, under whose power the bishopric of Tours resided when the *Histories* was brought to completion, Fredegund was supremely unlikely to receive a positive treatment in the *Histories*.[866] Gregory, as we have seen, was also personally aggrieved by Fredegund's treatment of bishop Praetextatus, for whose death he held her personally responsible.[867] But for all that, Gregory's treatment of Fredegund's behaviour is not entirely negative, and is marked by a considerable amount of not always unsympathetic reflection on Fredegund's state of mind at the time of her violent actions.

Fredegund is accused by Gregory of all sorts of violent excesses, including the assassination of king Sigebert and her own son-in-law, Clovis. He even goes so far as to implicate her in conspiring with Goths and Bretons to bring about the deaths of Frankish aristocrats and members of the royal family.[868] The charges levelled at Fredegund by Childebert's emissaries in reported speech, however, go even further: she is additionally accused of the killing of Brunhild's sister Galswinth, her other stepson Merovech, and even her own husband, Chilperic, as well as being referred to as a *homicida* and *malefica*.[869] Gregory's position on these incidents is more nuanced: Fredegund is only indirectly implicated in the death of Galswinth, with blame being squarely placed upon their mutual husband, Chilperic; Merovech is again independently suspected and pursued by Chilperic, whose suspicion is excited primarily by Merovech's marriage to Brunhild; and Gregory indirectly exonerates Fredegund over the death of her husband, making clear that Chilperic's assassination was disastrous for Fredegund, both personally, and in respect of the marriage plans of her daughter,

866 Wood (1993), p. 258-9.
867 *Histories* VIII.31, 41
868 *Histories* V.18; VIII.31; VIII.41.
869 "'Redde homicidam, quae amitam meam suggillavit, quae patrem interfecit et patruum, quae ipsus quoque consobrinus meus gladio interemit'." (VII.7); "'Rogat nepus tuus, ut Fredegundem maleficam, per quam multi reges interfecti sunt, reddi iubeas ad ulciscendam mortem patris, patrui vel consubrinorum suorum'" (VII.14). Ian Wood (1994, p. 124) observes that the *Liber Historiae Francorum* repeats the charge that Fredegund had Chilperic murdered, claiming that he had discovered her infidelity – *Liber Historiae Francorum* 35

Rigunth.[870] Gregory also insistently refers to Fredegund as *regina* or *mulier*, rather than adopting the insulting language preferred by Childebert's emissaries.[871] And, as we have seen, although he reports the aspersions cast on her marital fidelity, he does not use his editorial power to lend credibility to their provenance.[872]

Gregory's attitude toward Fredegund is thus more ambivalent than it appears at first glance. His refusal to directly impugn her sexual reputation may have much to do with the desire to protect the kingdoms from the possibility of civil war that could result from calling Lothar's claim into question.[873] But the relative sympathy with which some of her violence is treated is not so readily explained by reference to dynastic concerns. As we have seen, not all of Fredegund's killings equally excited Gregory's disapproval, and some evidently won his admiration, especially the brutal slaying of Leudast and the feuding *viri*, whose deaths Gregory reported with grim satisfaction.[874] And even some of her more controversial assassinations, like the death of Clovis and Sigebert "of glorious memory", are prefaced with condemnations of the victims that serve to dilute the audience's sense of outrage and cast Fredegund as an astute decision-maker and/or the instrument of God's judgement.[875] The assassination of Childebert's father, Sigebert, is especially illustrative of Gregory's determination to avoid total partisanship: Rather than take the opportunity to bewail the underhanded plotting of Fredegund, Gregory makes clear that the assassination was fully justified – both in political and divine terms – by Sigebert's sinful determination to slay his brother, which disdained the prophetic warnings of St Germanus.

Gregory's condemnations of Fredegund, then, do not slavishly follow the lines established by Childebert or his supporters, and he frequently balances them with specific justifications of her actions, showing some willingness to portray her

870 *Histories* IV.28; V.2, 3, 14, 18; VI.46; VII.4.
871 Although he does accuse her of harbouring a woman with demonic powers of prophecy – *Histories* VII.44.
872 Dailey (2015, p. 127-8) takes a different view.
873 Wood (1993), p. 258-9.
874 *Histories* VI.32; X.27. The killing of the feuding *viri* (X.27) – in which Fredegund is portrayed as well-intentioned and decisive – is especially instructive, since it is included gratuitously without any apparent link to wider events.
875 *Histories* IV.51. On the circumstances of Clovis's death, see below.

actions with at least a modicum of fairness and sympathy. And, while Fredegund was at times used by Gregory as an exemplar of deplorable conduct,[876] even these embellishments are not without value, since they tell us something about the types of behaviour about which he sought to warn his audience. If we do take the evocations of Fredegund's psychology seriously, they give the impression of a figure whose actions bear several hallmarks of psychological adaptations resulting from the experience of violence. As in the case of Leudast, these include reactive aggression and hostile attribution biases. Unlike the former count of Tours, Fredegund's actions are not contextualized in any accounts of her youth. But they are much more thoroughly contextualised in immediate circumstances, particularly the often politically motivated accusations that characterized the life not just of Fredegund's court, but also those courts for which Gregory felt more sympathy. They are also embellished with considerably more reflections upon her motivations and psychological disposition.

Much of Fredegund's violence is readily explicable by reference to strategic concerns, usually the preservation of her and Chilperic's positions and lives, and promoting the interests of her children.[877] Although Gregory is not at pains to emphasise the point, Fredegund's elimination of so many rivals, as well as her accumulation of vast personal wealth and a coterie of able and loyal followers, several of whom she induces to undertake virtual suicide missions, marks her out as a highly capable strategist of considerable intelligence and charisma.[878] But some of Fredegund's actions bear the hallmarks of a degree of psychological volatility and vigilance that exceeds the ordinary requirements of political strategy. The episodes that stand out in this respect are (in chronological order) some of her dealings with Nicetius, husband to an unnamed niece of Gregory; with her stepson Clovis and Mummolus the prefect (both of which are associated with the deaths of her children from disease); with her *domesticus* Leunard; with bishop Praetextatus; and with her own daughter, Rigunth.[879] Through these

876 See Daily 2015, p. 140-159
877 See. For instance, Wood (1994), p. 123-6
878 e.g. *Histories* IV.51; V.18; VI.32. For a detailed account of the justification of the first phase of Fredegund's vendetta against Praetextatus, and the falsehood of Gregory's claim that Praetextatus's banishment was uncanonical, see Dailey (2015), p. 222-224
879 *Histories* V.14; V.39; VI.35; VII.15; VIII.31; IX.34

incidents, Gregory constructs a picture of an individual – and possibly more importantly, of a court[880] – with such sensitivity to threats that they are sometimes perceived even where they do not exist, and with strong inclinations to respond violently to such perceived threats.

The first accusation implying hostile attribution bias comes in the context of the defiance of Fredegund's stepson, Merovech, who, after an abortive marriage to her mortal enemy Brunhild, had escaped from relegation to monastic life and taken refuge in Tours cathedral. Gregory sent a deacon to inform Childeric that Merovech had taken up residence at Tours, and his relative, Nicetius, accompanied the deacon on some other business. But when the two arrived with the news, Gregory tells us that Fredegund ordered them arrested, claiming that they were spies sent by Merovech.[881] Of course, it is possible that Gregory's relative was in league with Merovech, and if so we could not very well expect to be made aware of the fact, but the fact of Nicetius's subsequent pardon implies that no evidence to this effect was ever produced.

The next two incidents relate to the various diseases that ravaged the Frankish kingdoms in the later 6th century, which were exceptionally hard on Fredegund. The queen was powerless to save her children, whose deaths provided opportunities for substantial reflections by Gregory not only on the moral causes of Fredegund's loss, but their emotional consequences.[882] But whatever the motives for his portrayal of Fredegund as seriously disturbed by these tragedies, it should be noted that it is psychologically credible, and backed up with references to specific and idiosyncratic acts, such as the burning of Chilperic's tax-records, and Fredegund's retirement to the forest of Cuise for a period of mourning, which do not cast the queen in an entirely negative light.[883] After the

880 Gregory's concern for the destructive effects of court whispering is evident in the *Lives of the Fathers (*VIII.3), in which he explicitly admonishes "those people [who]...do not even fear to have witnesses who by wicked reports say 'We have heard so-and-so saying such-and-such about you.'"

881 *Histories* V.14

882 *Histories* V.22; V.34.

883 *Histories* V.22; V.34; V.39. Cf. Rosenwein (2006), p. 117. Dailey insists, *contra* Myers and Halsall, that even Fredegund's burning of the tax-records was intended simply to show that she was irredeemably sinful, and that any implied sympathy was accidental, but given Gregory's several other moments of ambiguity toward Fredegund, this is not convincing. See Dailey 2015, p. 134, citing Myers, H. A. *Medieval Kingship* (Chicago 1982), p. 86-8, and Halsall, "Nero and Herod..." (2002), p. 342.

death of a third child (Theuderic), however, Gregory reports that Fredegund's attribution of the her losses to God rapidly gave way to suspicions of foul play that imply severe hostile attribution biases, resulting in a violent campaign against the perceived culprits.

The first noble victim of these suspicions is the prefect Mummolus, whose arrest and mutilation is preceded by an extraordinary episode in which a number of Parisian women are rounded up and tortured into implicating both him and themselves in the ostensible conspiracy, before being executed as witches. Gregory tells us that the grim events were set in motion when "it was announced to the queen that her little son… had been taken from her by witchcraft and incantations, and that Mummolus the prefect, whom she had long hated, was involved in this." Gregory is adamant that the story is incorrect, but interestingly, he does not dismiss it as a pure fiction, telling us instead that it was based on the rumour that Mummolus had bragged that he possessed a herb which was capable of curing dysentery, of which it is implied that Theuderic had died. Indeed, clarifying his dramatic opening statement, Gregory tells us that it was in fact this rumour that had been reported to Fredegund, at which "a great fury was kindled" within her.[884]

This incident, in which the potentially malicious report of rumours is instrumental, throws into relief the importance of court attendants and the rumours circulating among them in generating and exciting hostile attribution biases.[885] Naturally the suspicion arises that Gregory is seeking to portray Fredegund negatively, but as a literary device, the claim of a malefic misinterpretation of Mummolus's rash statements is strangely precise and superfluous. Had Gregory sought to paint Fredegund as hysterical, he could have simply said that she had blamed Mummolus without cause; had he sought to make her cunning and malicious, he could have reported that she had cynically used her son's death as a pretext for the killing of a long-term enemy. What he actually gives us is a statement by Mummolus which, given the apparent pre-

884 *Histories* VI.35
885 cf. Dolan (2012), p. 2-9. See above, n. 878

existing enmity between himself and the queen, was arguably open to the kind of malefic over-interpretation which Fredegund had placed upon it.

The next incident – which saw Fredegund's stepson Clovis imprisoned on suspicion of witchcraft and assassinated – extends the theme of the psychological trauma of plague, mixing it seamlessly with elements of dynastic ambition. Seeking, Gregory informs us, to bring about Clovis's death, Fredegund sent him to the city of Berny, where the plague was still raging. When Clovis returned unharmed, Gregory reports that "he began to boast in a childish way… 'fate has made me heir to the entire country. My enemies are in my power and I may do to them whatever I choose.' He also made unforgivable remarks about his stepmother, Fredegund. She came to hear of this and was terrified..."[886] Subsequently, Gregory tells us that Fredegund was persuaded by unnamed court attendants that Clovis was responsible for bringing about her sons' deaths through witchcraft, just as in the case of Mummolus some time earlier, and presumably by the same logic: his personal safety from plague implied his complicity.

The uncomfortable mixture of cool dynastic strategy and reactive aggression defies any attempt to neatly categorise the motivations in this incident. In this case, of course, Fredegund had much better and more practical reasons for wanting rid of her last remaining stepson Clovis, who Gregory makes quite clear stood ready to dispose of her once he assumed the throne. But interestingly, without clearing the queen of underhanded tactics or dynastic ambitions, Gregory implies that her accusations of witchcraft – though unfair – were made in good faith, and that she was genuinely unsettled by Clovis's words, which were both insulting and menacing. The overall impression is of legitimate fears about Clovis's intentions dovetailing with hostile attribution biases that tended to put him at the centre of a conspiracy to which all of Fredegund's past tragedies were attributable. And again, discussions at court are implicated in the process.

886 "Igitur cum in supradicta villam apud patrem habitaret, coepit inmaturae iactare vel dicere: 'Ecce, mortuos fratres meus, ad me restitit omne regnum; mihi universae Galliae subicientur, imperiumque universum mihi fata largita sunt! Ecce inimicis in manu positis inferam quaecumque placuerit!' Sed et de noverca sua Fredegunde regina non condecibilia detractabat. Quae illa audiens, pavore nimio terrebatur." *Histories* V.39

The same tendencies to hostile attribution bias appear again in the case of Fredegund's *domesticus* Leunard, who comes to Paris to report the sorry fate of Rigunth's dowry. Fredegund, "furore commota", has Leunard *spoliare* and thrown out of the cathedral, while the chefs and other servants who returned with him are mutilated and stripped.[887] Both Dailey and Gradowitz-Pancer are inclined to view this act as cooler and more strategic than it appears at first sight, relating it to social expectations and particularly the need for Fredegund not to appear weak in this moment of political vulnerability.[888] But the title of the chapter – *De malitia Fredegunde* – implies that this was not a consensus view among her contemporaries. Indeed, if such reactions were regarded as conventional, the functioning of the entire political system might have been compromised by the universal reluctance to deliver bad news, and we can hardly imagine that Leunard or the *servi* who accompanied him walked into the cathedral fully expecting to be so roughly treated. Social expectations demanding a show of strength, after all, presumably had to be balanced against expectations that loyalty would be rewarded rather than punished. The impression that emerges is, once again, that Fredegund suspected the secret complicity of Leunard and the *servi* in the crime that they had come to report, (unfairly, in Gregory's view,) and punished them accordingly.

The next case – the assassination of bishop Praetextatus – has already been considered at some length.[889] As we have seen, while Gregory was of the opinion that Fredegund was personally responsible for the killing, others were evidently willing to accept the possibility that a *puer* had taken matters into his own hands.[890] Nonetheless, similar contours to the previous incidents are evident. After being restored to his bishopric, Praetextatus exchanges bitter words with the widowed and vulnerable Fredegund - "She told him that the time would come when he would have to return to the exile from which he had been recalled. 'In exile and out of exile I have always been a bishop,' replied Praetextatus, 'but you will not always enjoy royal power… when you give up

887 *Histories* VII.15
888 Dailey (2015), p. 128-9
889 *Histories* VIII.31. Above, p. 35-6
890 See above, n. 190

your role as queen you will be plunged into the abyss...' The queen bore his words ill. She was extremely angry when she left him." Praetextatus's words may have been meant as a reflection on divine punishment, or possibly as a prophecy, but in a moment of such extreme political vulnerability, it is easy to see how they might be perceived both as a grave insult and an indirect threat. And whether or not Fredegund's *puer* received direct orders or not, his actions imply that a threat was perceived within her court.

The final incident is the only one in which Fredegund is accused of personal violence, in this case against her erstwhile daughter, Rigunth.[891] The two, we are told, frequently fought physically, "et non de alia causa maxime, nisi quia Rigundis adulteria sequebatur". But on one occasion Fredegund is said to have gone considerably further, actually attempting to seriously injure or even kill her daughter by slamming the lid of a large strong-box down on her neck. Again, the attack is contextualized in the ill-chosen words of Rigunth, who reportedly "said that she herself was the real mistress, whereas her mother ought to revert to her previous rank of serving woman." Once again, the implication is that Fredegund overreacted to statements which may not have been intended as threats, but were interpretable as such.

Through this sequence of incidents, which span nearly the entire second half of the *Histories*, Gregory constructs a picture of an individual and a court with severe and recurrent tendencies to over-interpret potentially threatening behaviour and respond with extreme violence. And given that Fredegund's court was composed almost entirely of individuals who had been frequently exposed to violence of the utmost physical immediacy and severity,[892] in many cases as perpetrators as well as witnesses and victims, this account is psychologically believable. Fredegund herself, in her journey from low status to political power, would have been exposed in the early years in particular to the violence of her royal patron and husband.[893] And Fredegund was exposed to the imminent

891 *Histories* IX.34

892 In the sense used by Grossman (1996), Section 3, ch. 5.

893 Given the vaunted cruelty of Childeric (e.g. *Histories* VI.46) this may be a significant point – Richey, A. & Brown, S. et al, "The role of hostile attributions in the associations between child maltreatment and reactive and proactive aggression", in *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma* 25:10 (2016), 1043-1057.

possibility of a cruel death when Sigebert's forces besieged her and Chilperic at Tournai, which Gregory again burnishes with an idiosyncratic account of her psychological distress.[894]

Overall, then, the picture constructed by Gregory of a court is carefully contextualized in a way that lends it a certain psychological credibility. It is nevertheless overwhelmingly likely, given Gregory's relationship with Fredegund and her enemies, that some elements of this consistent portrayal of hostile attribution biases at Fredegund's court were designed to set it up as an exemplar of how not to behave in political life. But far from detracting from the interest of the sequence, this potential didactic intention makes these psychologically credible incidents all the more instructive. The basic pattern observable through Fredegund's career – accusations or suspicions leading to violent reprisals, often after attempts to extract confessions by torture – is a reasonably common phenomenon in the *Histories* at the other royal courts. The fundamental difference in the case of Fredegund is the level of detail that Gregory supplies, and the incredulity he shows toward the accusers. When Fredegund suspects foul play, Gregory is frequently adamant that her suspicions are unfounded, although he does not portray her as totally paranoid. Whereas in the case of Childebert and Brunhild, the veracity of supposed plots against them is never questioned, even when – as in the case of Septimina and Droctulf, or even the killing of duke Rauching – the only evidence cited are anonymous accusations and confessions extracted by torture.[895] Guntram, though more admired by Gregory than any other contemporary, stands between these two relatively idealized poles: he is the target of several real plots, but also on two occasions, *ira commotus*, acts on unfair accusations, resulting in regrettable and gratuitous acts of violence against his subordinates.[896]

---

894 Dailey sees this account, which claims that Fredegund rejected her newborn child and wanted to kill him because of her fear of imminent death, as designed to cast her as callously contemptuous of her son's immortal soul. But again, the claim that such distress can cause severe psychological trauma is borne out by the scientific literature – See Osario, C. & Jones, N. et al, "Combat experiences and their relationship to post-traumatic stress disorder symptom clusters in UK military personnel deployed to Afghanistan", in *Behavioural Medicine* (Mar 2017), n. 17-22

895 *Histories* VIII.36; IX.9; IX.38

896 *Histories* VIII.11; X.10

Thus only Childebert and Brunhild, whose political power loomed most immediately over Gregory's diocese, escaped accusations of hostile attribution bias. Yet it was their courts, more than any other, with which Gregory was most familiar and to which he addressed his moral instruction. And while Fredegund's court was far from unique in being filled with people who had frequently been exposed to violence, Gregory was uniquely liberated in her case to repeat what he had heard of their worst excesses. In other words, what Gregory may be giving us in his reports of Fredegund is not so much an idiosyncratic account of a uniquely violent political figure, as an idiosyncratically detailed account of the kind of hostile attribution biases and aggressive responses that pertained to elite court life more generally, the psychological realism of which were derived principally from his intimate personal knowledge of the courts of his patrons.[897]

Winnoch the Breton

A final case pertains to a Breton pilgrim, Winnoch, who was induced by Gregory to become a priest and remain in Tours when he passed through the diocese on the way to Rome. Winnoch's behavioural trajectory – which in this case we can be absolutely certain was not embellished by Gregory to blacken his reputation – raises fascinating questions about the relationship of pilgrimage, monasticism, and alcohol to the psychological consequences of contemporary military violence. Winnoch, Gregory tells us, though unordained, was a pilgrim of exceptional abstinence: "...He wore no clothes except sheepskins from which the wool had been removed. He seemed to me a most pious man and in the hope of keeping him with me I ordained him priest." Winnoch is even credited by Gregory with the special favour of St Martin, who performs a miracle through him.[898] But when we next encounter the Breton, he suffers a tragic fate, as his abstinence is overcome by the generosity of his *devoti*, and he sinks into abject alcoholism. And the most interesting aspect of Winnoch's decline from our perspective is the change in his behaviour when under the influence…

897 The posthumous reputation of Brunhild, which was much more violent than the impression offered by Gregory, tends to confirm this view, although this impression was equally coloured by contemporary political factors – see above, n. 619

898 *Histories* V.21

> "…as time passed, his intemperance became worse and worse. He was possessed by a devil, and shaken by energy, to the extent that he would pick up a knife or whatever weapon he could lay his hands on, sometimes a stone, sometimes a stick, and chase after people in insane fury. In the end, there was nothing for it but to chain him up and lock him in his cell. Condemned to this fate, he continued to rave for a couple of years, and then he gave up the ghost."[899]

The most immediate context for Winnoch's pilgrimage was a period of brutal and inconclusive civil war among the Bretons, which had left the region divided between hostile factions.[900] Historians to date have not found this coincidence interesting, but in light of modern research into the psychological consequences of war, it may be highly significant.[901] For many warriors, pilgrimage would have been the one and only legitimate route away from military service. It not only served to assuage the potential guilt associated with the excesses of military campaigning, but also to distance the pilgrim from the violent social lives and expectations that characterised their milieu.[902] As we have seen, both guilt and avoidance are potential symptoms of violent trauma, and Winnoch's exceptional self-denial and reluctance to return home imply that he was particularly troubled in these respects.[903] Winnoch's initial abstinence from, and subsequent addiction to, alcohol are also indicative of the effects of trauma, and his extraordinary and indiscriminate physical aggression under its influence provides another reason to suspect that this individual was a psychological casualty of contemporary warfare.[904]

---

899 "Unde factum est, ut, invalescente temulentia, tempore procidente, a daemonio correptus, per inergiam vexaretur, in tantum ut, accepto cultro vel quodcumque genus teli sive lapidem aut fustem potuisset adrepere, post homines insano furore discurreret. Unde necessitas exigit, ut catenis vinctus costodiretur in cellula. In hac quoque damnatione per duorum annorum spatia debachans, spiritum exalavit." *Histories* VIII.34

900 *Histories* V.16. It is quite possible, and would be in keeping with Gregory's narrative tendency to separate 'personal' from 'historical' matters, that Winnoch was the source of this account.

901 See Chapter 1, n. 62-64

902 Association with violent peers being one of the more important factors in continued participation in violence identified by modern studies – see Chapter 1, n. 81-84

903 Norman, S. B. & Wilkins, K. C. et al, "Trauma informed guilt reduction therapy with combat veterans", in *Cognitive Behavioural Practice* 21:1 (Feb 2014), 78-88. Pineless, S. L. & Mostoufi, S. M. et al, "Trauma reactivity, avoidant coping, and PTSD symptoms: A moderating relationship?", in *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 120:1 (2011), 240-246. See Chapter 1.

A further point of interest lies in Gregory's description of Winnoch as "a daemonio correptus, per inergiam vexaretur" during his violent outbursts. Surveying the other uses of this kind of terminology in the *Histories*, it is clear that demonic and energetic possession – which appear to be broadly interchangeable – are used to describe several phenomena, including prophetic powers, false testimony, and being troubled by voices or non-specific physical pain.[905] But uncontrolled aggression and violence are also a distinct and important facet of demonic possession: some members of Guntram's army are said to have fought and wounded each-other after being possessed by demons.[906] Even more interestingly, the anonymous men accused by Gregory of indiscriminately slaying the *pueri* of Claudius and Eberulf are referred to as "inergumini et diversi egeni".[907] And when Claudius launches a drunken torrent of verbal abuse at Gregory for locking his men out of St Martin's tomb, he is described as "ut ita dicam, agi a daemone".[908]

The implication of these examples are threefold. First, it appears that there was some social appreciation of uncontrolled aggression as a contemporary behavioural and psychological problem, albeit without any exclusive terminology to describe it. Second, the identification of potentially violent "inergumini" in the urban environs of Tours raises the possibility that the wars and violent social life of the period was producing an effluent of psychological casualties which society, and the church in particular, struggled to accommodate. And third, the description of the drunkenly aggressive, but clearly not totally out of control, Eberulf as "ut ita dicam, agi a daemone" illustrates the conceptual

904 Taft, C. T. & Kaloupek, D. G. et al, "Posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, physiological reactivity, alcohol problems, and aggression among military veterans", in *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 116:3 (2007), 498-507; Brown, J. M. & Williams, J. et al, "Postdeployment alcohol use, aggression, and post-traumatic stress disorder", in *Military Medicine* 177:10 (2012), 1184-1190. Mcfarlane, A.C. "Epidemiological evidence about the relationship between PTSD and alcohol abuse: The nature of the association", in *Addictive Behaviours* 23:6 (1998), 813-825.

905 *Histories* VI.8; VI.29; VII.44; IX.6; cf. Gray (2005)

906 In the context of God's punishment for an attack on the church of St Vincent - ""Nonnulli arrepti a daemone, per inergiam debachantes martyrem declamabant. Plurimi vero semoti a seditione propriis se iaculis sauciabant." *Histories* VII.35

907 *Histories* VII.29; see above.

908 *Histories* VII.22

continuity between conventional aggression associated with *utilitas* in excess and the kinds of behaviours associated with demonic and energetic possession.

* * *

These rare examples of behavioural development, although invariably incomplete and infused with the authorial agendas of Gregory, thus offer some fascinating glimpses and unique insights into the psychological consequences of the violent social lives in which the ruling elites were expected to participate. There are signs of a number of psychological adaptations, including intrinsic motivations for violence, and possible traumatic symptoms. But at an elite level, the consequences of experiencing violence appear to have manifested themselves principally in the form of learned inclinations to hyper-vigilance, hostile attribution biases and reactive aggression. Given the keen competition for political power, the evident dangerousness of participation in elite affairs both for political figures and their followers, and the potential social capital to be derived from reputations for effective violence, this hardly comes as a surprise. But the specific examples cited here illustrate that these behaviours, and the reactively aggressive psychological adaptations with which they were associated, were capable of stretching and going beyond contemporary social expectations and political expediency. Indeed, an interesting – if insoluble – question extending from these case studies is how much of the political violence of the period was associated with overreactions to perceived threats or slights, resulting from such adaptations. But perhaps this is to trifurcate social, strategic and psychological causation too strictly, when in reality all three were mixing seamlessly. In a world where learned inclinations to aggression and violence were so ordinary, the lines between justified violence and overreaction would frequently have been obscure and tendentious, and the expectations and demands relating to violence were in a constant state of negotiation.

Overall Conclusion

This thesis began with the problematisation of a process that has all too frequently been taken for granted: the (sub-)cultural production of individuals who are willing and able to participate in the kind of sustained, savage and intimate violence entailed in ancient warfare. It was established that the answer potentially lay in the conditions of relatively ordinary social life, by which individuals can be inured to violence through a constellation of practices, mores and values that perpetuate the experience of violence and construct it as normal, necessary, and virtuous. And the Franks and other warrior groups who composed the post-Roman Frankish kingdoms were offered as an excellent potential case study – due to the rich repository of evidence for violence contained in *Lex Salica* and the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours – for analysis along these lines. It remains to reflect on the conclusions of this analysis, consider questions that remain unanswered, and point to new questions raised by the thesis that may be addressed through future research.

It must be restated that the strength of the Frankish evidence is relative rather than absolute, and the conclusions arrived at in this study are necessarily suggestive rather than decisive. The most serious difficulty to emerge from any attempt to interpret the period using the insights of psychology is the almost total absence of the minutiae of household life. Associated with this is the clear paucity of evidence relating to women and children, or the violence to which they may have been exposed. *Lex Salica,* which is predominantly concerned with violence between free families rather than within them, systematically ignores this dimension of contemporary experience. At the same time, the predilection of Gregory of Tours for momentous and spectacular events, and his occasional reluctance to indulge in scandalous talk, ensure that the few scenes of home life that he does depict are sketchy and stereotyped. This is a substantial problem, since domestic and childhood experience in particular are universally agreed to be profoundly influential in the behavioural and psychological development of individuals. There may be some hope, in the form of hagiography in particular,

that this limitation can be partially addressed, but anything like a full and detailed account of domestic experience in this period is likely to remain out of reach.

The vision of a Frankish takeover characterized by ‘peaceful accommodation’, and the low-violence interpretation of the Frankish kingdoms proposed by Goffart and others has not been conclusively overturned, and this would not be possible given the available evidence. However, in seeing military violence as the outcome not just of appropriate financial and social incentives, but also as the expression of violent behavioural and psychological profiles that only come about through experience, the notion that a society governed by active and enthusiastic participants in ancient warfare would have been ordinarily peaceful *ceteris paribus* is much more difficult to sustain. The view that the Franks were relatively peaceful settlers determined to reach agreement with their new hosts remains within the realm of possibility, if the maximal view of continuity of Roman military organization and discipline offered by Bachrach is maintained. But, as we have seen, there are strong indications that even the late Roman armies of northern Gaul were substantially reliant for their manpower on violent subcultures within and beyond the frontiers, and Roman military organization was never as homogeneous and tightly ordered as has sometimes been assumed. Nonetheless, without denying the interest of the question of whether and in what ways life was becoming more or less violent in this period, it must be accepted that it remains open to a range of interpretations.

Having acknowledged these difficulties and limitations, a tentative picture of how the post-Roman Frankish kingdoms produced men who were behaviourally and psychologically primed for the rigours and horrors of ancient warfare can be constructed. The central forum for psychological conditioning identified here (in the absence of many clues about domestic life) would appear to be the *contubernium* or small group of men, the kind of which are alluded to in *Lex Salica* and described incidentally in the *Histories*. The key mechanism by which the group psychologically conditioned its members was through the diversity of

ages, statuses, and degrees of behavioural adaptation present in the group. This is what facilitated the 'transmission' of psychological and behavioural adaptations associated with violence between veteran warriors and their less experienced counterparts. And the vital psychological substrate was the cultural construction of violence as normal and necessary, and the cultural construction of manhood and status as positively associated with violence and revenge.

At the lowest level of this group, in terms of combat experience and adaptation, were "those with arrows": slaves and free or half-free juveniles.[909] As the bottom of the group hierarchy, these individuals would not be expected to participate in armed conflict with other groups, since they were ill-equipped, materially, psychologically and legally, to fight with experienced and genuinely hostile opponents. They would, however, have been heavily exposed to the familial violence of their seniors. In practice much of this hierarchical violence would have resulted from the psychopathologies of more experienced members of the group. But it would equally have been the result of well-meaning intentions to instil necessary *virilitas* – resilience in the face of violence – in their inexperienced juniors. The young and unfree might also be expected to scuffle with each-other, although at this point the nature of their armament and their limited behavioural adaptation would have made that violence, for the most part, non-injurious. Thus at this point in the psychological development of junior warriors, violence would have been experienced primarily as witness and victim, rather than perpetrator.

In the middle of the group hierarchy were the half-free warriors who are so central to the action in the *Histories*. These would include unfree members of the group who had showed the necessary physical and psychological qualities and been armed with spear, shield, helm and, depending on the benefactor, more advanced war-gear. This rank was associated with more responsibilities, the most important of which was full participation in any violent conflicts between their group and others. They also gained superiority over their unfree associates, with the corresponding prerogatives and responsibilities of hierarchical and disciplinary violence. Thus the balance of experience for these middle-ranking

909 See Chapter 4, p. 138; and Chapter 6, section 2.2.

members shifted toward perpetration of violence. But they were still potential victims of their superiors, and they were now most exposed to the greater dangers of fully-armed skirmishes against *inimici* who were not restrained by bonds of kinship and service. It may have been in this period of development that warriors were most likely to suffer the sort of head injuries that *Lex Salica* regards as conventional, and which appeared with such frequency in our sample of Alammanic and Frankish skulls.[910]

Those who survived and showed promise under such conditions could be made into influential agents, and brought to the army by their free patrons, which was associated with full freedom and recognition as a *vir* rather than a mere *puer*. At this point they graduated to full participation in the unrestrained, lethal and terrifying violence of the battlefield. For this they had been prepared by long experience of violence as witness, victim, and perpetrator, including combat, albeit under the relatively controlled conditions imposed by the customs alluded to in *Lex Salica.* And in recognition of their now respected role, they gained full legal protection from hierarchical violence, and could only be abused by figures of exceptional wealth, power and influence, finally escaping the ordinary expectation of being violently victimised.

Of course, those who were born into freedom would have been spared the worst excesses endured by those of lower status, and therefore had less experience as victims of violence. But as juniors they would still have been exposed to the violence of their elders, who had every reason to encourage them to develop *virilitas*. Thus for free and unfree warrior alike, the path to seniority was a journey to a promised land of participation in battle and freedom from hierarchical violence, which were intimately associated with one-another. And this journey had aspects of economic incentive, cultural expectation, and psychological conditioning.

The research done here thus implies that, contrary to common assumptions, the violence and turbulence of elite social life in the Frankish kingdoms would

910 See Chapter 4, sections 1 and 3.

have actually contributed to, rather than diminished, their military effectiveness. Those kingdoms had inherited considerably less of the Roman machinery of government than their southern rivals, but they had inherited a much greater proportion of the violent frontier subcultures that had provided the late Roman armies with an inordinate number of willing and effective military recruits. The greater facility (relative to the other barbarian codes) for reciprocal and hierarchical violence without state intervention provided by *Lex Salica* may be regarded as a partial expression of that fact. And such customs may indeed have been instrumental in unifying a new kingdom in which the most important common bonds shared by the multicultural elite were shared traditions of participation in violence.

In the long view, the work done here points to something of a synthesis between existing theories about the process by which the Frankish kingdoms were formed in the former empire. On the one hand, the considerable exposure of the Franks and other frontier subcultures to warfare, and the violent tenor of the laws and social life produced by the kingdoms into which they coalesced, implies that the process of takeover would indeed have been characterized by violence rather than peaceful accommodation. On the other hand, the similarities of the the several subcultures out of which the warrior culture of the kingdoms was formed may have facilitated a greater degree of assimilation and voluntary alliance between incoming warrior elite and newly conquered groups than that achieved by other contemporary barbarian kingdoms. Indeed, even the self-consciously 'Roman' units mentioned by Procopius rapidly embraced the new ruling class and their customs, which were exceptionally tolerant of the excesses associated with psychological adaptation to violence.

Further lines of enquiry are also suggested by what we have seen of the subculture of violence in the Frankish kingdoms. A question that naturally arises from the study of the north-western frontier is comparative. Why did the warrior cultures of the other frontiers – Britain, Thrace, Africa, and Asia – and of the other *gentes*, turn out as differently as they did? This thesis has produced some suggestive evidence regarding the warrior culture that emerged on the north-western frontier, but the work of comparing that evidence in detail to near-

contemporary contexts elsewhere remains to be done. Another question is chronological. How did this subculture evolve into the Carolingian period and beyond? And how deep were its roots? The present study has been content to look at *Lex Salica* in it's early sixth-century context, but how far the contents of this text represent a relatively innovative product of its time, a modified expression of ancient customs that went back to the forests of third-century Germany, or the enactment in writing of traditions of reciprocal justice that had characterized the *auxilia* of the Roman armies, remains a matter for investigation. However, the extraordinary qualitative and quantitative diversity of the evidence between regions and centuries make these complicated propositions. A related line of investigation, possibly even more difficult but certainly stimulating, would be a diachronic comparison of the warrior culture of the Frankish kingdoms with the cultures and practices that characterise powerful military or paramilitary elites in modern theatres of conflict, such as Somalia, northern Iraq, Honduras and northern Mexico.[911]

Probably the most interesting and potentially productive future line of inquiry – given the nature of the surviving evidence base – is the question of how Christianity interacted with post-Roman warrior cultures in conditioning how participants in violence perceived and processed their experiences, and the knock-on effects of these processes to the historical development of Western Europe. The example of Winnoch the Breton in the last section highlighted the interpretation of spontaneous violence, through a Christian lens, as demonic possession. It also touched on the potential of monasticism to function as an alternative life choice for those who were particularly troubled by their experiences of elite violence, and even a program for the treatment of trauma. What this suggests is that the growth of monastic culture may have been not only a means of enhancing aristocratic esteem and defending property, but also a biproduct of the psychological effluent of trauma produced by the violence of elite life.

911 Some studies raise interesting comparisons and contrasts, for instance, Quitero, G. A. and Estrada, A. L. "Cultural models of masculinity and drug use: 'machismo,' heroin, and street survival on the U.S.-Mexico border", in *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 5.1 (1998), p. 147-168; Williams, P. "Illicit markets, weak states and violence: Iraq and Mexico", in *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 52. 3 (2009), p. 323-336

The intimate association of Saints and their Lives to the experience and morality of violence also indicates that a concerted study of psychological aspects of their *vitae* and cults could be productive. Some of the most prominent early medieval saints – from Martin, forced into the army by his warrior father, to Radegund, claimed as a prize by a conquering warlord – had lives in which the experience of violence was an important context. And many miracle stories of the period were based on the miraculous avoidance of violence, the restoration of bodies destroyed by violence, or the divine punishment of violent men. These represent a deep well of psychologically resonant material, whose relationship to warrior cultures and the violent practices they entailed remains under-explored.

In a recent volume on warfare in late Antiquity, Alexander Sarantis complained about the still "comparatively marginal position" of the study of warfare, which "is undeserved considering that it played a central role in the world of Late Antiquity, impinging on the social, economic and political life of most provinces at one or another time".[912] By bringing into relief the psychological implications of violence, this study has sought to comprehend the relationship between warfare and "social, economic and political life" more fully, and to show that they are joined by their reciprocal influence on – and responsiveness to – the behavioural development of their participants.

912 Sarantis, A. "Waging war in Late Antiquity", in A. Serantis and N. Christie (eds.), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 2013)

Appendix – Graphic Illustration of Offence Distribution in *Pactus Legis Salicae*

Key – The major thresholds of violence valued in *solidi* (95 per cent of all offences fall into one of these categories).

3 = Single Blow for *Ingenuus* [XVII.8, 10]

15 = 120 Lashes for *Servus* [XL.1];
Blood-shedding Assault for *Ingenuus* [XVII.3-4, 9]

30-35 = 240 Lashes or Castration for *Servus* [XL.4];
Serious Assault for *Ingenuus* [XVII.5-6]

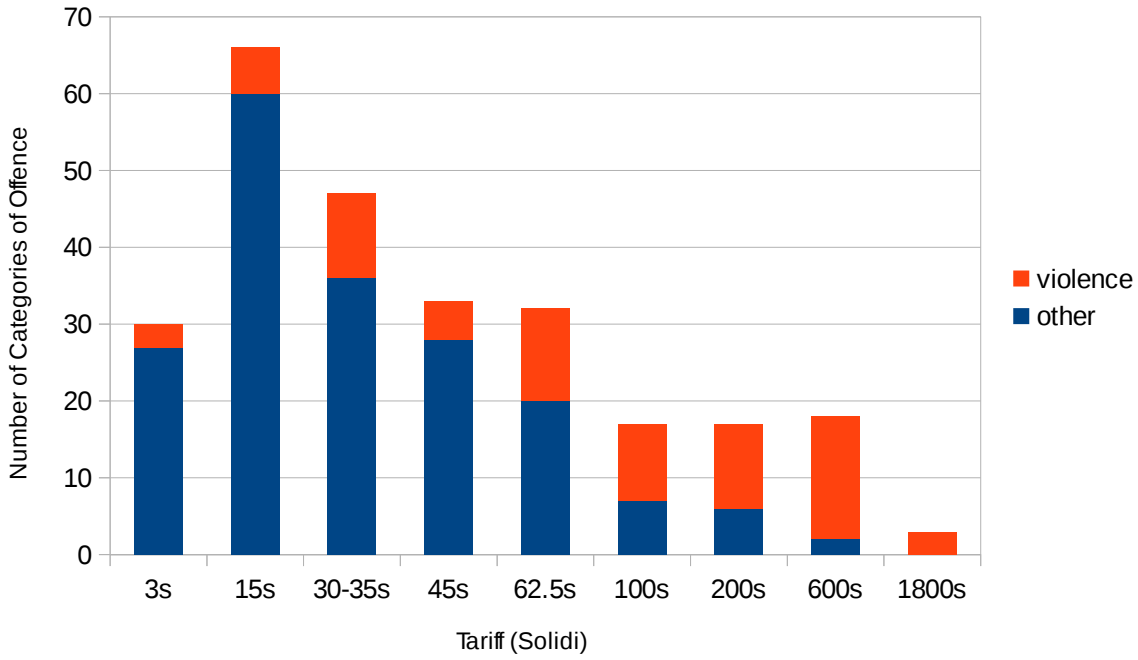
45 = **Death for *Servus*** [XL.5];
'Infamous' Mutilation for *Ingenuus* (?) [XXIX.13; Above, p. 136]

62.5/100 = **Death for *Letus, Puer* or *Romanus*** [XXV.8; XLI.9-10; XIII.7];
Disabling Mutilation for *Ingenuus* [XIX.1-3, 11-12, 15, 18]

200 = **Death for *Ingenuus*** [XV.1; XLI.1, 3; XLIII.3]

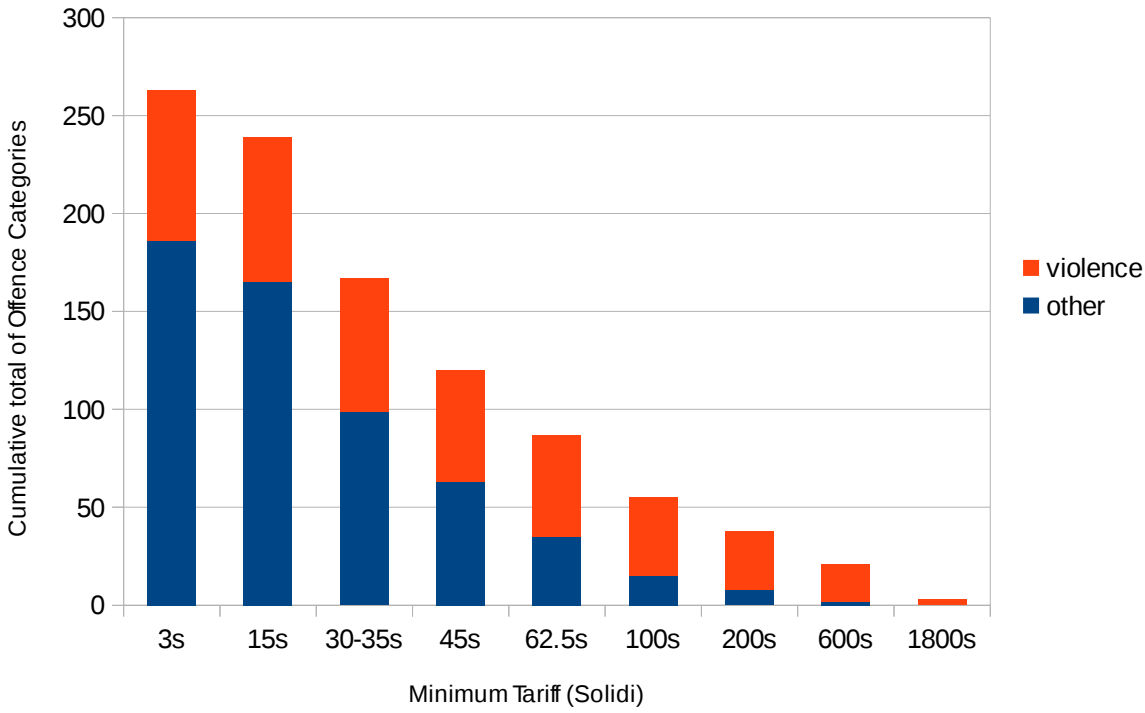
600 = 'Triple Death' for *Ingenuus* (?) [Above, p. 130-2];
Death for *Ingenuus* "in truste dominica" [XLI.5-7; LIV.1, 3]

Graph 1 - Total Number of Offence Categories at each Level of Severity



Graph 2 - Relative Exposure to Retaliatory Violence by Social Class

Columns show cumulative totals of offence categories carrying at least the listed tariff



Bibliography

Primary Sources

Ammianus Marcellinus (ed. and trans. J. C. Rolfe), *History* [*Res Gestae*] (3 vols.), Loeb Classical Library 300, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University, 1950)

Augustine (trans. B. Ramsey), *Responses to Miscellaneous Questions*, (New York: New City Press, 2008)

Aurelius Victor (ed. F. Pichlmayr), *Liber de Caesaribus*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1911)

(trans. H. W. Bird), *De Caesaribus*, (Liverpool University, 1994)

Avitus of Vienne (trans. Shanzer, D. & Wood, I.), *Letters and Selected Prose* (Cambridge University, 2002)

Blockley, R. C. (ed. and trans.), *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1981)

Edictum Rothari and *Leges Luitprandi* in F. Bluhme (ed.), *Leges Langobardorum. Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Leges in folio*, Vol. IV (Hanover: Hahn, 1868)

(trans. K. F. Drew), *The Lombard Laws*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1973)

Böcking, E. (ed.), *Notitia Dignitatum et Administrationum Omnium tam Civilium quam Militarium in partibus Orientis et Occidentis*, (Bonnae: Adolph Marcus, 1853)

(trans. W. Fairley), *Register of Dignitaries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1899)

Ekhardt, K. A. (ed.), *Pactus Legis Salicae. Monumenta Germania Historica. Legum Sectio I, Leges Nationum Germanicarum*, Vol. IV, Part 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1962)

Hessels, J. H. (ed.), *Lex Salica: The ten Texts with the Glosses, and the Lex Emendata*, (London: Murray, 1880)

(trans. K. F. Drew), *The Laws of the Salian Franks* (University of Pennsylvania, 1991)

Einhard, (ed. & trans. E. S. Firchow and E. H. Zeydel), *Vita Karoli Magni: The Life of Charlemagne*, (Coral Gables: University of Miami, 1972)

Eusebius (ed. & trans. J. E. L. Oulton), *Ecclesiastical History.* Loeb Classical Library, 2 Vols. (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1926-1932)

Flavius Merobaudes (trans. F. L. Clover), "Flavius Merobaudes: A translation and historical commentary", in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 61:1 (1971), 1-78

Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* (*Ten Books of Histories*)

(eds. B. Krusch, & W. Levison), *Gregorii episcopi Turonensis. Libri Historiarum X*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores Rerum Merovinicarum.* Vol I.1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1951)

(trans. L. Thorpe), *The History of the Franks*, (London: Penguin, 1974)

---------- *Vitae Patrum* (*Lives of the Fathers*)

---------- *Virtutes Sancti Martini* (*Miracles of St Martin*)

---------- *Liber de Virtutibus Sancti Juliani* (*Suffering of St Julian*)

---------- *Libri in Gloria Martyrum* (*Glory of the Martyrs*)

(ed. B. Krusch), *Miracula et Opera Minora*, in *MGH SRM* I.2 (Hannover: Hahn, 1885)

(trans. R. van Dam), (Liverpool University, 1988-2002)

Herodian (ed. and trans. C. R. Whittaker), *History of the Empire.* Loeb Classical Library, 2 Vols. (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1969-1970)

Julian (ed. and trans. Wright, W. C.), *Works*, 2 Volumes, (London: William Heineman, 1913)

Krusch, B. (ed.), *Vita Genovefae Virginis Parisiensis. Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*, III, 204-238

Libanius (ed. and trans. A. F. Norman), *Selected Orations.* Loeb Classical Library, 3 Vols. (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1969-1977)

Krusch, B. (ed.), *Liber Historiae Francorum. Monumenta Germania Historica. Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*, Vol. 2, (Hanover: Hahn, 1888)

Maassen, F. (ed.), *Concilia Aevi Merovingici*. *Monumenta Germania Historica. Legum Section III. Concilia* Vol. I, (Hanover: Hahn, 1893)

Magie, D. (ed. and trans.), *Historia Augusta.* Loeb Classical Library, 3 Vols. (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1921-1932)

Merobaudes (trans. F. L. Clover) “Flavius Merobaudes: A translation and historical commentary”, in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 61:1 (1971), p. 1-78

Codex Theodosianus, in (eds. T. Mommsen and P. M. Meyer), *Theodosiani libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis et leges novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*. 2 vols., (Berlin: Weidmannos, 1905)

Nixon, C. E. V. and Rodgers, B. S. (eds. and trans.), *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994)

Orosius, (ed K. Zangemeister), *Pauli Orosii historiarum adversum paganos libri VII*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1889)

(trans. A. T. Fear), *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, (Liverpool University 2010)

Polybius (ed. and trans. W. R. Paton), *The Histories*. Loeb Classical Library. 5 Vols. (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 2010-2012)

Priscus of Panium (trans. J. Given), *The Fragmentary History of Priscus: Attila, the Huns and the Roman Empire*, (New Jersey: Evolution, 2014)

Procopius (ed. and trans. H. B. Dewing), *History of the Wars*. Loeb Classical Library. 5 Vols, (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1914-1928)

Prosper of Aquitaine (ed. T. Mommsen), *Chronicon minora saec. VI, V, VI, VII*, Vol. I, *Monumenta Germania Historica. Scriptores, Auctores antiquissimi* 9, (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892)

Rio, A. (ed. and trans.) *The formularies of Angers and Marculf: Two Merovingian Legal handbooks*, (Liverpool University, 2008)

de Salis, S. R. (ed.), *Leges Burgundionum. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Legum Sectio I*, Vol. II, Part 1. (Hanover: Hahn, 1892)

(trans. K. F. Drew), *The Burgundian Laws*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania 1972)

Salvian (ed. J. P. Migne), *De Gubernatione Dei Octo Libri*, in *Patrologiae Latinae, Cursus Completus*, Book LIII (1865)

Sidonius Apollinaris (ed. and trans. W. B. Anderson), *Poems. Letters.* Loeb Classical Library. 2 Vols (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1936-1965)

Sozomen, “Ecclesiastical History”, in Schaff, P. and Wace, H. (eds.) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, vol. 2, (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890)

Strabo (trans. H. L. Jones), *Geography*. Loeb Classical Library, 8 Vols., (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1917-1932)

Symmachus, *Epistulae* and *Orationes*, in J. P. Callu (ed.), *Symmaque. Lettres. Discours. Rapports.*, 5 vols., (Paris: Les Belles Lettres)

(trans. B. S. Rodgers) Symmachus’ panegyric for Valentianian (c. 360), at <https://www.uvm.edu/~bsaylor/rome/Symmachus1.pdf>

Tacitus (trans. M. Hutton, W. Peterson, C. H. Moore, J. Jackson), *Agricola. Germania. Histories. Annals.* Loeb Classical Library. 5 Vols (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1925-1937)

Vegetius (ed. C. Lang), *Epitoma Rei Militaris.* Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1869)

(trans. N. P. Milner), *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science*, (Liverpool University, 1993)

Venantius Fortunatus (ed. F. Leo), *Opera Poetica. Monumenta Germania Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi*, Vol. IV, Part 1, (Hanover: Hahn, 1881)

Zeumer, K. (ed.), *Leges Visigothorum. Monumenta Germania Historica. Legum, Sectio I.* Vol. 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1902)

Zosimus (trans. anonymous), *New History* (Leiden: Green & Chaplain, 1814)

Secondary Sources

Adams, J. N. *The regional diversification of Latin*, 200 BC – 600 AD, (Cambridge University, 2007)

Anderson Jr, T. "Roman military colonies in Gaul, Salian Ethnogenesis and the forgotten meaning of *Pactus Legis Salicae*", in J. France & K. Devries, (eds.) *Warfare in the Dark Ages* (London: Routledge, 2017), 28-54

Argenti, M. & Schramm, K. (eds.), *Remembering Violence: Anthropological Perspectives on intergenerational transmission* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010)

Airlie, S. "The history of emotions and emotional history", in *Early Medieval Europe*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2001), 235-241

Athens, L. *Violent Criminal acts and actors revisited* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1997)

Athens, L. "Violentization in larger social context", in Athens, L. & Ullmer, J. T. (eds.) *Violent acts and violentization: assessing, applying, and developing Lonnie Athens' theories* (Oxford 2003), 8-18

Athens, L. & Ullmer, J. T. (eds.) *Violent acts and violentization: assessing, applying, and developing Lonnie Athens' theories*, (Oxford 2003)

Ausenda, G. "Current issues and future directions in the study of the Merovingian period", in Wood, I. (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge 1998), 371-454

Austin, G. “Vengeance and law in eleventh-century Worms Burchard and the canon law of feuds”, in Pennington, K. et al (eds.), *Medieval church law and the origins of western legal tradition* (Washington: Catholic University, 2006)

Bachrach, B. S. *Merovingian Military Organization* (University of Minnesota, 1972)

------- “Merovingian armies and paid soldiers in imperial perspective”, in France, J. (ed.) *Mercenaries and paid men: the mercenary identity in the middle ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 167-192

Bandura, A., Ross, D. & Ross, S. A., “Transmission of aggression through the imitation of aggressive models”, in *Journal of Abnormal & Social Psychology* vol. 63, iss. 3, 575-82

Barak, G. “A Critical Perspective on Violence” in DeKeseredy, W. S. & B. Perry (eds.), *Advancing Critical Criminology: Theory and Application* (Lexington Books, 2006), 133-154

Barlow, J. “Kinship, Identity and Fourth-century Franks”, in *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte*, Bd. 45, H. 2 (2nd Qtr 1996), 223-239

Bispham, E. “Warfare and the army” in Bispham, E. (ed.) *Roman Europe* (Oxford University, 2008)

Blackburn, M. “Money and Coinage”, in R. Mckitterick (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge University, 1995), 660-674

Bloch, M. *Feudal society*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul ltd., 1961)

Blockley, R. C. “Warfare and Diplomacy”, in A. Cameron and P. Garnsey (eds.) *The Cambridge Ancient History, 13: The Late Empire, AD 337-425* (Cambridge University, 1998), 411-436

de Blois, L. “The military factor in the onset of crises in the Roman empire in the third century AD”, in L. de Blois & E. lo Castro (eds.), *The Impact of the Roman Army (200 BC–476 AD): Economic, Social, Political, Religious and Cultural Aspects*, (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 497-509

Böhme, H. W. *Germanische Grabfunde des 4 und 5 Jarhunderts zwischen unterer Elbe und Loire. Studien zur Chronologie und Bevölkerungsgeschichte* (Munich 1974)

Bordieu, P. (trans. R. Nice) *The logic of Practice*, (Stanford University, 1990)

Bossy, J. *Disputes and settlements: Law and human relations in the west* (Cambridge University, 1983)

Bourke, J. *An Intimate History of Killing* (London: Basic Books, 1999)

Boylston, A. “Evidence for weapon-related trauma in British archaeological samples”, in Cox, M & Mays, S. (eds.), *Human Osteology in Archaeology and Forensic Science* (London 2000), 357-380

Brown, J. M. & Williams, J. et al, “Postdeployment alcohol use, aggression, and post-traumatic stress disorder”, in *Military Medicine* 177:10 (2012), 1184-1190

Brown, W. C. *Violence in Medieval Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2011)

Brown, P. “Relics and Social Status in the age of Gregory of Tours”, Stanton Lecture (1976); reprinted in Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (University of California, 1982), p. 222-250

–---------- “Introduction: Gregory of Tours”, in K. Mitchell and I. Wood (eds.), *The World of Gregory of Tours* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1-28

Burrows, M. "Gregory of Tours, political criticism and lower-class violence", in Wood, I et al (ed.), *Mirabilia* 18 (2014)

Buss, A. H., & Perry, M. "The Aggression Questionnaire" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 63 (1992), 452-459

Campbell, D. "Review article: The later Roman Army", in *Britannia*, vol. 30 (1999), 391-394

Chambers, J. W. "S. L. A. Marshall's *Men Against Fire*: New evidence regarding fire ratios", in *Perameters* 33 (Autumn 2003), 113-121

Charles, M. *Vegetius in Context: Establishing the date of the Epitoma rei Militaris* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2007)

Charles-Edwards, T. M. "Law in the Western kingdoms between the fifth and the seventh century", in A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins and M. Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History Volume 14: Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, AD 425–600* (Cambridge University, 2001)

Chen, P., Coccaro, E. F. & Jacobson, K. C. "Hostile Attributional Bias, Negative Emotional Responding, and Aggression in Adults: Moderating Effects of Gender and Impulsivity, in *Aggressive Behaviour* vol. 38, no. 1 (Jan-Feb 2012), 47-63

Christie, N. "Wars within the frontiers: Archaeologies of rebellion, revolt and civil war", in A. Sarantis and N. Christie (eds.), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2013)

Clark, J. "Desires of the Hangman: Augustine on Legitimized Violence", in Drake, H. A. (ed.) *Violence in Late Antiquity: perceptions and practices,* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006)

Cleary, S. E. *The Roman West, AD 200-500: An Archaeological Study* (Cambridge University, 2013)

Collins, R. “The western kingdoms”, in *The Cambridge Ancient History Volume 14: Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, AD 425–600* (Cambridge University, 2001)

Collins, R. *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory* (Princeton University, 2009)

Connor, D. F. *Aggression and Antisocial behaviour in Children and Adolescents: Research and Treatment* (New York: Guilford, 2004)

Contamine, P. (trans. M. Jones), *War in the Middle Ages*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1984)

Coulston, J. C. N. “Late Roman military equipment culture”, in A. Sarantis and N. Christie (eds.), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 463-492

Dailey, E. T. *Queens, Consorts, Concubines: Gregory of Tours and Women of the Merovingian Elite* (Leiden: Brill 2015)

De Nie, G. *Views from a Many Windowed Tower: Studies of Imagination in the Works of Gregory of Tours* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987)

Delbruck, H. *Numbers in History* (London: Hodder, 1913)

---------- (trans. W. J. Renfroe) *History of the Art of War, volume II: The barbarian invasions*, (Licoln: University of Nebraska, 1990 [1920])

Dierkens, A. and Perin, P. “The fifth-century advance of the Franks in Belgica II: history and archaeology”, in E. Taayke, J. H. Looijenga, O. H. Harsema and H. R. Renders (eds.), *Essays on the Early Franks* (Eelde: Barkhuis, 2003), 165-193

Dill, S. *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926)

Dodge, K. A. “Social information processing patterns as mediators of the interactions between genetic factors and life experiences in the development of aggressive behaviour” in Shaver, P. R. & Mikulincer, M. (eds.) *Human aggression and violence: causes, manifestations, and consequences* (Washington 2011), 168-176

Dodge, K. A. & Malone, P. S. et al, “Hostile Attribution Bias and aggressive behaviour in global context”, in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* vol. 112, iss. 30 (2015), 9310-9315

Dodge, K.A. & Somberg, D. R. “Hostile attributional biases among aggressive boys are exacerbated under conditions of threats to the self”, in *Child Development* 58:1 (Feb 1987), p. 213-224

Dolan, A. “‘You Would Do Better to Keep Your Mouth Shut:’ The Significance of Talk in Sixth-Century Gaul”, in *Journal of the Western Society for French History,* vol. 40 (2012)

Drake, H. A. “Introduction: Gauging violence in Late Antiquity”, in Drake, H. A. (ed.) *Violence in Late Antiquity: perceptions and practices*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006)

Drinkwater, J. F. *The Alamanni and Rome, 213-496 (Caracella to Clovis),* (Oxford University, 2007)

Drinkwater, J. & Elton, H. (eds.) *Fifth-Century Gaul: A crisis of identity?* (Cambridge University, 2002)

Du Picq, A. *Battle Studies* (New York: Macmillan, 1921)

Durlait, J. *Les rentiers de l'impôt : recherches sur les finances municipales dans la Pars Orientis au IVe siècle* (Vienna : Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1993)

Effros, B. *Merovingian mortuary archaeology and the making of the early middle ages* (Berkeley: University of California, 2003)

Esders, S. "Wergild and social practice in the Early Middle Ages: A 9th-century Reichenau fragment and its context", in *Entre texte et histoire: Études d'histoire médiévale offertes au professeur Shoichi Sato*, (Paris: Editions de Boccard 2015), 117–127

Elton, H. "Imperial Campaigns between Diocletian and Honorius, A.D. 284-423: The Rhine Frontier and the Western Provinces", in Sarantis, A. and Christie, N. (eds.) *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 655-682

Erdmann, C. *The origin of the idea of Crusade* (Princeton University, 1935; repr. 1977)

Evans-Pritchard, E. *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford University, 1940)

Foucault, M. (trans A. Sheridan), *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1978])

Foucault, M. (trans. R. Hurley) *Michel Foucault: Essential Works, Volume 3; Power* (London: Routledge, 2000)

Foucault, M. (trans. S. Hand), *The archaeology of knowledge* (London: Routledge 2002)

Fouracre, P. "'Placita' and the settlement of disputes in later Merovingian Francia", in Fouracre, P. & Davies, W. (eds.) *The settlement of disputes in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge University, 1986), 23-44

---------- (ed.) *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge University, 1995)

---------- "Attitudes towards violence in seventh- and eighth-century Francia", in G. Halsall (ed.) *Violence and Society in the early medieval West* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1998)

Fouracre, P. & Davies, W. (eds.) *The settlement of disputes in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge University, 1986)

Fouracre, P. & Davies, W. (eds.) *Property and power in the early middle ages* (Cambridge University, 1995)

France, J. "Holy war and holy men: Erdmann and the lives of saints", in M. Bull & N. Housley (ed.), *The experience of Crusading: Western approaches* (Cambridge University, 2003)

Frassetto, M. *The Early Medieval World*, (Santa Barbara 2013)

Freud, S. (trans. and ed., J. Strachey) *Civilization and its Discontents*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961)

Friedl, L. "Confounding factors in determining fracture frequencies in skeletal populations", in *AntropoWebzin* vol. 2 (2011) <http://www.antropoweb.cz/media/document/friedl-2-2011.pdf>

Gaier, C. “Review of B. S. Bachrach, *Merovongian military organisation, 481-751*,” in *Speculum* vol. 49, no. 3 (1974), 549-551

Garcia Moreno, L. A. “Legitimate and illegitimate violence in Visigothic law”, in N. B. Aitchison and G. Halsall (ed.) *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1998)

Gardner, A. *An archaeology of identity: Soldiers and society in Late Roman Britain* (Oxford University, 2007)

Garfinkel, S. & Liberzon, I. “Neurobiology of PTSD: A review of neuroimaging findings”, in *Psychiatric Annals* vol. 39, iss. 6 (June 2009), 370-381

Garfinkel, S. & Abelson, J. L., King, A. P., Sripada, R. K., Wang, X., Gaines, L. M. and Liberzon, I. “Impaired Contextual Modulation of Memories in PTSD: An fMRI and Psychophysiological Study of Extinction Retention and Fear Renewal”, in *Journal of Neuroscience* vol. 34, iss. 40 (2014), 13435-13443

Gazi, A. “Pruning peasants: Private war and maintaining the lords’ peace in late medieval Germany”, in Cohen, E. & De Jong, M. B. *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power, and Gifts in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 245-274

Geary, P. J. *Before France and Germany: The creation and transformation of the Merovingian World* (Oxford University, 1988)

--------- “Barbarians and Ethnicity”, in G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown & O. Grabar (eds.), *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, (London: Bellknap, 1999), 107-129

--------- “Judicial Violence and Torture in the Carolingian Empire”, in R.Karras, J. Kaye, and A. Matter, (eds.) *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 79-88

Gerberding, R. “The later Roman empire”, in Fouracre, P. (ed.) *The new Cambridge medieval history volume 1: c. 500-c. 700* (Cambridge 1995), 13-34

Gergen, “Social psychology as social construction: the emerging vision”, in McGarty, C. & Haslam, A. (eds.) *The message of social psychology: Perspectives on mind in society*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)

Gibbon, E. *The history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: Harper [1776-8; repr. 1836)

Gilligan, J. *Violence: reflections on our deadliest epidemic* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Jessica Kingsley, 1999)

Gluckman, M. *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963 [1955])

Glass, A. “Preventive psychiatry in the combat zone”, in *US Armed Forces Medical Journal*, vol. 4, iss. 683 (1953)

Goetz, H.-W. “*Gens*, kings and kingdoms: the Franks”, in Goetz, H.-W., Jarnut, J. & Pohl, W. (ed.), *Regna and Gentes: The relationship between late Antique and early Medieval peoples and kingdoms in the transformation of the Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 2003)

Goffart, W. “Rome, Constantinople, and the Barbarians”, in *American Historical Review*, vol. 86, no. 2 (Apr. 1981), 275-306

Goffart, W. “Foreigners in the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours”, in *Florilegium* 4 (1982)

Goffart, W. *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon*, (Princeton University, 1988)

-------- W. *Rome's Fall and After* (London: Hambledon, 1989)

-------- "Rome, Constantinople and the barbarians", in *AHR* vol. 86, no. 2 (Apr. 1981), 275-306

--------- *The narrators of barbarian history, A.D. 500-800* (New Jersey: Princeton University, 1988)

---------- "Two notes on Germanic antiquity today", in *Traditio*, vol. 50 (1995), 9-30

---------- *Barbarian Tides*, (Philadelphia 2006)

---------- "Frankish military duty and the fate of Roman taxation", in *Early Medieval Europe*, vol. 16, issue 2 (May 2008), 166-190

Goldberg, M.S. "Death and Injury rates of US military personnel in Iraq", in *Military Medicine* 175, 4:220 (2010)

Gradowicz-Pancer, N. "De-gendering female violence: Merovingian female honour as an 'exchange of violence'", in *Early Medieval Europe*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2002), 1-18

Grey, Demonaics and Dissent, and Disempowerment in the Late Roman West: Some Case Studies from the Hagiographical Literatures, in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Volume 13, Number 1, Spring 2005, pp. 39-69

Green, D. H. *Language and History in the Early Germanic World* (Cambridge University 1998)

Grossman, D. *On killing: the psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1996)

Hakkanen-Nyholm, H. & Nyholm, J.-O. *Psychopathy and Law: A Practitioner's Guide* (New York: John Wiley and sons, 2012)

Halbamayer, E. "Socio-cosmological contexts and forms of violence: War, vendetta, duels and suicide among the Yukpa of north-western Venezuela", in Schmidt, B. E. & Schroder, I. W. *Anthropology of violence and conflict* (London: Routledge, 2001), 49-75

Halfond, G. I. *Archaeology of Frankish Church Councils, A.D. 511-768* (Leiden: Brill, 2010)

Halsall, G. "Social identities and social relationships in Merovingian Gaul", in I. Wood.(ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 141-165

---------- "Violence and society: an introductory survey" in N. B. Aitchison and G. Halsall (ed.) *Violence and Society in the early medieval West* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1998), 1-45

---------- "Reflections on Early Medieval violence: the example of the 'blood-feud'", in *Memoria y Civilisacion*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1999), 7-29

---------- *Warfare and Society in the barbarian West, 450-900*, (London: Routledge, 2003)

---------- *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568*, (Cambridge University, 2007)

---------- “The preface to Book V of Gregory of Tours’ *Histories*: its form, context and significance”, in *English Historical Review* vol. 122, iss. 496 (Apr 2007)

---------- “Childeric’s grave, Clovis’ succession, and the origins of the Merovingian kingdom”, in G. Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 169-187

Harries, J. “Violence, victims and legal tradition in Late Antiquity”, in H. A. Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006)

Haselgrove, C. ‘La Romanisation de l'Habitat Rural dans la Vallée de l'Aisne d'Aprés les Prospectations de Surface et les Fouilles Récentes’, in *Revue Archeologique de Picardie Special*, vol. 11 (1996), 109–114

Heather, P. “The Late Roman art of client management: Imperial defence in the fourth century West, in W. Pohl, I. Wood and H. Reimitz (eds.) *The Transformation of Frontiers: From Late antiquity to the Carolingians*, (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 15-68

---------- *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A new history of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford University, 2006)

---------- “*Foedera* and *foederati* of the fourth century”, in T. F. X. Noble (ed.), *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms* (London: Routledge, 2006), 292-307

---------- “Ethnicity, group identity, and social status in the migration period”, in Garipzanof, I. H., Geary, P. & Urbanczyk, P. (eds.), *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: identities and state formation in early medieval Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008)

---------- *Empires and Barbarians: The Fall of Rome and the Birth of Europe,* (Oxford University, 2009)

---------- "Law and Society in the Burgundian kingdom", in Rio, A. (ed.), *Law, Custom and Justice in the early middle ages* (London: Centre for Hellenic Studies, 2011), 115-153

---------- "Imperial centre and Northwest frontier, A. D. 300-476", (forthcoming)

Heather, P. & Matthews, J. *The Goths in the Fourth Century* (Liverpool University, 2010)

Hedeager, L. "Empire, frontier and the barbarian hinterland: Rome and norther Europe from AD 1-400", in Rowlands, M., Larsen, M. & Kristiansen, K. (eds.), *Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World*, (Cambridge University, 1987), 125-140

Heinzelmann, M. (trans. C. Carroll) *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century* translated by C. Carroll (Cambridge University, 2001)

Hemphill, S. A., Smith, R., Toumbourou, J. W., Herrenkohl, T. I., Catalano, R. F., McMorris, B. J. and Romaniuk, H. "Modifiable determinants of youth violence in Australia and the United States: A longitudinal study", in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* vol. 42, no. 3 (Dec 2009), 289-309

Hen, Y. *Culture and religion in Merovingian Gaul: A.D. 481-751* (Leiden: Brill, 1995)

Herve, H. "Psychopathy across the ages: A history of the Hare Psychopath", in H. Herve and J. C. Yuille (eds.) *The Psychopath* (New York 2007), 31-56

Huessman, L. R., Dubow, E. F. & Boxer, P. "The transmission of aggressiveness across generations: Biological contextual, and social learning processes" in

Shaver, P. R. & Mikulincer, M. (eds.) *Human aggression and violence: causes, manifestations, and consequences* (Washington 2011)

Huesmann, L. R. & Kirwil, L. "Why observing violence increases the risk of violent behaviour by the observer", in D. J. Flannery, A. T. Vazsonyi, & I. D. Waldman (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of violent behaviour and aggression* (Cambridge 2007), 545-570

Horowitz, D. L. *The deadly ethnic riot* (San Francisco: Berkeley, 2001)

Hyams, P. R. "Neither unnatural nor wholly negative: The future of medieval vengeance", in Throop, A. & Hyams, P. R. (eds.), *Vengeance in the middle ages: emotion, religion and feud*, (Farnham: Ashate, 2010), 203-220

Irsigler, F. "On the aristocratic character of early Frankish society", in Reuter, T. (ed. & trans.), *The Medieval Nobility* (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1978), 105-136

Jacoby, T. *Understanding conflict and violence: theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2008)

James, E. "The militarization of Roman society, 400-700", in A. N. Jorgensen & B. L. Clausen (eds.), *Military aspects of Scandinavian society in a European perspective AD 1-1300*, National Museum Studies in Archaeology and History 2 (Kopenhagen: National Museum, 1997)

---------- "Childhood and youth in the early middle ages", in Goldberg, P. J. P. & Riddy, F. *Youth in the middle ages* (York 2004), 11-24

Janin, H. *Medieval Justice: Cases and laws in France, England and Germany, 500-1500*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004)

Johnson, S. *Late Roman Fortifications* (London: Batsford, 1983)

Johnson, M. H. “Rethinking historical archaeology”, in P. P. A. Funari et al (eds.), *Historical Archaeology: Back from the Edge* (New York 1999), 23-36

Jones, A. H. M. *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 3 Vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964)

---------- *The Decline of the Ancient World* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966)

Kahneman, D. *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Random House, 2011)

Kazanski, M. “Barbarian Military Equipment and its Evolution in the Late Roman and Great Migration Periods”, in A. Serantis and N. Christie (eds.), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 2013), 493-522

Keegan, *The face of battle* (London: Cape, 1976)

Kehoe, D. P. *The Economics of Agriculture in the Imperial Estates in North Africa* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988)

Kellet, A. *Combat motivation: the behaviour of soldiers in battle* (Boston: Kluwer, 1982)

Kellet, A. “Combat motivation”, in Belenky, G. *Contemporary studies in combat psychiatry* (New York: Greewood, 1987)

Khawand, C. “The Cycle of (Legal) Violence? Child Abuse and Military Aspirations” (2009) [unpublished, Florida International University]

Kimble, M., Fleming, K. & Bennion, K. A. “Contributors to hypervigilance in a military and civilian sample” in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* vol. 28, iss. 8 (2013), 1672-1692

Knauft, B. M. “Reconsidering violence in simple human societies”, in *Current Anthropology* vol. 28, iss. 4 (Aug-Oct 1987), 457-500

Kuhn, T. S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (University of Chicago, 1970)

Krug, E. G., Dahlberg, L. L., Mercy, J. A., Zwi, A. B. and Lozano, R. “World Report on Violence and Health”, (Geneva: World Health Organization 2002)

Kulikowski, M. “Nation versus army: a necessary contrast?”, in Gillette, A. (ed.) *On Barbarian identity*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 69-84

Kulikowski, M. “The archaeology of war and the 5th century invasions”, in A. Serantis and N. Christie (eds.), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 683-702

Lambert, T. “Theft, homicide and crime in late Anglo-Saxon law”, in *Past & Present* vol. 214, issue 1 (Feb. 2012), 3-43

Landau, S. F. & Pfeffermann, D. “A time series analysis of violent crime and its relation to prolonged states of warfare: the Israeli case”, in *Criminology* vol. 26, iss. 3 (1988)

Latrouche, R. *The Birth of the Western Economy: Economic Aspects of the Dark Ages*, (New York 1961)

Lee, A. D. *War in Late Antiquity: A Social History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009)

Lewis, A. R. “The dukes in the *Regnum Francorum*, A.D. 551-751”, in *Speculum* vol. 51, no. 3 (July 1976), 381-410

Lewit, T. “Vanishing Villas: What happened to elite rural habitation in the 5th-6th century?”, in *Journal of Roman Archaeology* vol. 16 (2003), 160-174

Liebeschuetz, W. “The end of the Roman army”, in Rich and G. Shipley (eds.), *War and Society in the Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1993), 265-276

---------- “Cities, taxes and the accommodation of the barbarians: the theories of Durliat and Goffart”, from Pohl (ed.), *Kingdoms of the empire: the integration of the barbarians in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 1997)

---------- “Citizen status and law in the Roman empire and the Visigothic kingdom”, from W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction: the construction of ethnic communities, 300-800* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 131-152

Lutz, C. *Unnatural emotions: everyday sentiments on a Micronesian atoll and their challenge to Western theory*, (University of Chicago 1988)

MacGeorge, P. *Late Roman Warlords,* (Oxford University, 2002)

Macmanus, D. “Violent offending by UK military personnel deployed to Iraq and Afganistan: a data linkage cohort study”, in *The Lancet* vol. 381, iss. 9870 (16 March 2013), 907-917

Macek, I. “Predicament of war: Sarajevo experiences and the ethics of war” in Schmidt, B. E. & Schroder, I. W. *Anthropology of violence and conflict* (London 2001)

Mansbridge, J. J. “The rise and fall of Self-Interest in the explanation of political life”, in Mansbridge, J. J. (ed.) *Beyond Self-Interest* (Chicago University, 1990)

Marshall, S. L. A. *Men against fire: the problem of battle command*, (University of Oklahoma, 1947)

Maruna, S. & Butler, M. "Violent self-narratives and hostile attribution biases", in D. Youngs (ed.), *Behavioural Analysis of Crime: Studies in David Cantor's Investigative Psychology* (Aldershot 2017), 27-48

Mat Saat, M. B. & Geshina, A. M. S. "The risk of hypervigilance among police personnel", in *Beyond* (PDRM Selangor Bulletin), iss. 4 (2013), 22-24

Mattern, S. P. *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principiate* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999)

McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West*, (Cambridge University, 1990)

Mcfarlane, A.C. "Epidemiological evidence about the relationship between PTSD and alcohol abuse: The nature of the association", in *Addictive Behaviours* 23:6 (1998), 813-825

McKitterick, R. *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge University, 1989)

McRobbie, J. "Gender and violence in Gregory of Tours *Decem Libri Historiarum*," PhD Thesis, University of St Andrews (2012)

Mezei, M. "Jewish Communities in the Merovingian towns in the second half of the sixth century as described by Gregory of Tours", in *Chronica* vol. 5 (2005), 19-29

Miller, W. I. *An Eye for an Eye*, (Cambridge University, 2006)

Minor, C. E. “Bacaudae: A reconsideration”, in *Traditio,* vol. 51 (1996)

Morris, J. (ed.), *Domesday Book: Cambridgeshire* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1983)

Mostert, M. (ed.), *Medieval legal process: physical, spoken and written performances in the middle ages*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011)

Mullins, C. W. & Young, J. K. “Cultures of violence and acts of terror: applying a legitimation-habituation model to terrorism”, in *Crime and Delinquency* 58 (2010)

Murray, A. C. “The composition of the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours and its bearing on the political narrative”, in A. C. Murray (ed.) *A companion to Gregory of Tours* (Leiden: Brill, 2015)

Myers, H. A. *Medieval Kingship* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982)

Nadelson, T. *Trained to kill: soldiers at war* (Baltimore: Johns Hopins University, 2005)

Nelson, J. L. “Queens as Jezebels: the career of Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History”, in J. Nelson (ed.), *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 1-48

---------- “Dispute Settlement in Carolingian West Francia”, in J. Nelson, *The Frankish World* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 51-74

Newsome, B. “The myth of intrinsic combat motivation”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 26 (2003), 24-46

Niehoff, D. *The Biology of Violence* (New York : Free, 1999)

Nixon, N. E. V. “Relations between Visigoths and Romans in fifth-century Gaul”, in Drinkwater, J. & Elton, H. (eds.), *Fifth-century Gaul: A crisis of Identity?* (2002)

Norman, S. B. & Wilkins, K. C. et al, “Trauma informed guilt reduction therapy with combat veterans”, in *Cognitive Behavioural Practice* 21:1 (Feb 2014), 78-88

O’Gorman, E. “No place like Rome: Identity and difference in the *Germania* of Tacitus”, in Ash, R. (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Tacitus* (Oxford University, 2012)

Oliver, L. *The Body Legal in Barbarian Law*, (University of Toronto 2011)

Orobio de Castro, B., Veerman, J. W., Koops, W., Bosch, J. D. and Monshouwer, H. J. “Hostile attribution intent and aggressive behaviour: a meta-analysis”, in *Child Development* 73:3 (2002), 916-934

Osario, C., Jones, N., Jones, E., Robbins, I., Wessely, S. and Greenberg, N. “Combat Experiences and their Relationship to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Clusters in UK Military Personnel Deployed to Afghanistan”, in *Behavioural Medicine*, vol. 44, iss. 2 (Apr-June 2017), 131-140

Palmeri Sams, D. & Truscott, S. D. “Empathy, exposure to community violence, and use of violence among urban, at-risk adolescents”, in *Child and youth care forum* vol.33 iss.1 (Feb 2004), 33-50

Pampler, J. “The history of emotions: an interview with Willaim Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns”, in *History and Theory* vol. 49, issue 2 (May 2010), 237-265

Papachristos, A. V. “Murder by social structure: Dominance relations and the social structure of gang homicide”, in *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 115, iss. 1 (July 2009), 74-128

Perin, P. & Kazanski, M. “Identity and ethnicity during the era of migrations and barbarian kingdoms in light of archaeology in Gaul”, in R. W. Mathisen & D. Shanzer, *Romans, Barbarians, an the Transformation of the Roman World: Cultural interaction and the creation of identity in Late Antiquity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011)

Percival, J. “The fifth-century villa: new life or death postponed?”, in J. Drinkwater & H. Elton, (eds.) *Fifth-Century Gaul: A crisis of identity?* (Cambridge University, 2002)

Pineless, S. L. & Mostoufi, S. M., Ready, C. B., Street, A. E., Griffin, M. G. and Resick, P. A., “Trauma reactivity, avoidant coping, and PTSD symptoms: A moderating relationship?”, in *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* vol. 120, no. 1 (2011), 240-246

Pohl, W. “Telling the difference: signs of ethnic identity”, in Pohl & Reimitz (eds.) *Strategies of Distinction: the construction of ethnic communities, 300-800*, (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 17-69

---------- “Ethnicity, theory, and tradition: a response”, in A. Gillett (ed.), *On Barbarian Identity* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002)

---------- “Frontiers and ethnic identities: some final considerations”, in Curta, F. (ed.), *Borders, Barriers and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005)

---------- “Perceptions of Barbarian Violence”, in H. A. Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 15-26

Poly, J.-P. “Liberté, lien des guerriers, livre de droit. La *Lex Salica* entre coutume barbare et loi Romain”, in *Clio Themis, Revue électronique du histoire du droit* 10 (2016), 1-25

Popper, K. *The open society and its enemies* [II Vols.] (London: Routledge, 2008)

Quitero, G. A. and Estrada, A. L. “Cultural models of masculinity and drug use: ‘machismo,’ heroin, and street survival on the U.S.-Mexico border”, in *Contemporary Drug Problems* vol. 5, iss. 1 (March 1998), 147-168

Raine, A. “Autonomic nervous system factors underlying disinhibited, antisocial, and violent behaviour: biological perspectives and treatment implications”, in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* vol. 794, iss. 1 (September 1996), 46-59

Reddy, W. M. “Against Constructionism: the historical ethnography of emotions”, in *Current Anthropology* vol 38, no. 3 (June 1997), 327-351

Reuter, T. “Plunder and tribute in the Carolingian empire” in Rueter, T. (ed. J. L. Nelson) *Medieval polities and modern mentalities*, (Cambridge University, 2006), 231-250

---------- “The end of Carolingian military expansion” in Rueter, T. (ed. J. L. Nelson) *Medieval polities and modern mentalities*, (Cambridge University, 2006), 251-267

---------- “Carolingian and Ottonian Warfare”, in M. Keen (ed.), *Medieval Warfare: A History* (Oxford University, 1999), 13-35

Rheinberger, H.-J. *On Historicizing Epistemology: An essay* (Palo Alto: Stanford University, 2010)

Rhodes, R. “Violent socialization and the SS-Einsatzgruppen”, in Athens, L. & Ullmer, J. T. (eds.) *Violent acts and violentization: assessing, applying, and developing Lonnie Athens’ theories*, (Oxford 2003), 93-106

Richardson, P. J. & Boyd, R. *Not by genes alone: How culture transformed human evolution*, (University of Chicago 2005)

Riches, D. (ed.), *The Anthropology of Violence* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986)

Richey, A. & Brown, S. et al, “The role of hostile attributions in the associations between child maltreatment and reactive and proactive aggression”, in *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma* vol. 25, iss. 10 (2016), 1043-1057

Rio, A. “Charters, law codes and formulae: the Franks between theory and practice”, in Fouracre, P. & Ganz, D. (eds.), *Frankland. The Franks and the world of the early middle ages: essays in honour of Dame Jinty Nelson* (Manchester University, 2008)

--------- “Introduction”, in Rio, A. (ed.), *Law, Custom and Justice in the early middle ages* (London 2011), 1-22

Roach, C. B. “Shallow Affect, No Remorse: the shadow of trauma in the inner city”, in *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* vol. 19, iss. 2 (2013), 150-163

Rosen, L. N., Martin, L. “The measurement of childhood trauma among male and female soldiers in the U.S. Army”, Military Medicine, vol. 161, no. 6 (1996), 342-345

Rosenwein, B. H. (ed.), *Anger’s Past: The social uses of emotion in the middle ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1998)

---------- *Emotional Communities in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2006)

Rosenwein, B. H. & Little, L. K. “Social meaning in the monastic and mendicant spiritualities”, in *Past and Present* 63, no. 1 (May 1974), 4-32

Ross, M. H. “A Cross-Cultural Theory of Political Conflict and Violence”, in *Political Psychology*, vol. 7 no. 6 (1986), p. 447-453

Sarti, L. *Perceiving war and the military in early Christian Gaul (ca. 400-700 A.D.)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013)

Sarantis, A. “Waging war in Late Antiquity”, in A. Serantis and N. Christie (eds.), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1-100

Sarantis, A. and Christie, N. “Fortifications in the West: A bibliographical essay”, in A. Serantis and N. Christie (eds.), *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 255-296

Schmauder, M. “The relationship between Frankish *gens* and *regnum*: a proposal based on the archaeological evidence”, in Goetz, H.-W., Jarnut, J. and Pohl, W. (eds.), *Regna and Gentes: The relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 271-306

Schonberger, H. “The Roman Frontier in Germany: An archaeological survey”, in *The Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 59, no. 1/2 (1969), 144-197

Seager, R. “Roman policy on the Rhine and Danube in Ammianus”, in *The Classical Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 2 (Dec. 1999), 579-605

Shanzer, D. Review Article on M. Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century* translated by C. Carroll (Cambridge 2001), in *Medieval Prosopography* 23 (April 2002): 247-266

Shaver, P. R. & Mikulincer, M. (eds.) *Human aggression and violence: causes, manifestations, and consequences* (Washington D. C.: American Psychological Association, 2011)

Shaw, B. D. “War and Violence”, in Bowersock, G. W., Brown, P. & Grabar, O. *Late Antiquity: A guide to the postclassical world* (Cambridge, Mass.: Bellnap, 1999)

Siegfried, T. *A beautiful Math: John Nash, Game Theory, and the modern quest for a code of Nature* (Washington D. C.: Joseph Henry, 2006)

Siegmund, F. “Social structure and relations”, in I. Wood (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge 1998), 177-198

Simon, D. & Burns, E. *The Corner: A year in the life of an inner-city neighbourhood* (New York: Broadway Books, 1997)

Skae, T. “The violence virus: A community response to reducing youth violence in London”, report for The London Community Foundation (2017), <https://londoncf.org.uk/uploads/The-Violence-Virus-final.pdf>

Skinner, P. *Living with disfigurement in early medieval Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2016)

Smith, K. A. *War and the making of medieval monastic culture* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2011)

Southern, P. *The Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine* (New York: Routledge, 2001)

Southern, P. & Dixon, K. R., *The Late Roman Army* (New Haven: Yale University, 1996)

Sterling Jr, J. & Amaya-Jackson, L. [American Academy of Pediatrics], "Understanding the behavioural and emotional consequences of child abuse", in *Pediatrics* vol. 122, iss. 3 (Sep 2008)

Stewart, P. J. & Strathern, A. *Violence: Theory and ethnography* (London: Continuum, 2002)

Sutterluty, F. "Understanding Youth Violence: Rationality and its Limits", in *Illinois Child Welfare*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2009–2010), 47–64

Taft, C. T. & Kaloupek, G. et al, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder symptoms, psychological reactivity, alcohol problems, and aggression among military veterans", in *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* vol. 116, iss. 3 (2007), 498-507

Theuws, F. "Grave goods, ethnicity, and the rhetoric of burial rites in Late Antique northern Gaul" in Derks, T. & Roymans, N. *Ethnic constructs in Antiquity*, (Amsterdam University, 2009)

Theuws, F. & Alkemade, M. "A Kind of Mirror for Men: Sword depositions in Late Antique northern Gaul", in Theuws, F & Nelson, J. (eds.), *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2000)

Thompson, E. A. *The Huns* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)

Throop, S. A. and Hyams, P. (eds.), *Vengeance in the Early Middle Ages* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010)

Timmins, S., Sereville-Niel, C. and Brickley, M. "Childhood cranial trauma from a late Roman and Merovingian context from Michelet, Lisieux, France", in *International Journal of Ostoarcheaology* vol. 27 (2017): 715-722

Todd, M. “The Germanic peoples and Germanic society”, in *Cambridge Ancient History*, 12 (Cambridge University, 2005)

Todd, M. *The Early Germans*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & sons, 2009)

Tomlin, R. “A.H.M. Jones and the Army of the Fourth Century” in D. Gwynn (ed.) *A.H.M. Jones and the Later Roman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 143-165

Tylecote, R. F. *A History of Metallurgy*, (London: Antony Rowe, 1992)

Van Dam, R. *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*, (Princeton University, 1993)

---------- “Merovingian Gaul and the Frankish conquests”, in Fouracre (ed.) *The New Cambridge Medieval History Volume 1: c.500-700* (Cambridge University, 1995), 193-232

Van Ossel, P. & Ouzoulias, P. “Rural settlement economy in Northern Gaul in the Late Empire: an overview”, in *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, vol. 13 (2000), 133-160

Van Wees, H. *Greek Warfare: myths and realities*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2004)

Veblen, T. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1994 [1899])

Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe during the middle ages: from the eighth century to 1340*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997 [1954])

Wallace-Hadrill, J. M. “The work of Gregory of Tours in light of modern research”, in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* vol. 1 (1951), 25-45

---------- “The Bloodfeud of the Franks”, in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 41:2 (1959), 459-487

---------- “War and peace in the middle ages”, in J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Medieval History*, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1975)

Ward-Perkins, B. *The Fall of Rome: And the End of Civilization* (Oxford University, 2005)

Warren, W. L. *Henry II* (Berkeley: University of California, 1973)

Weber. J & Czarnetzki, A. “Neurotraumatological Aspects of Head Injuries Resulting From Sharp and Blunt Force in the Early Medieval Period of Southwestern Germany”, in *American Journal of Physical Anthropology,* vol. 114, iss. 4 (2001), 352-356

Whately, C. “Militarization, or the rise of a distinct military culture? The east Roman ruling elite in the 6th century AD”, in O’Brien, S. and Boatright, D. (eds.), *Warfare and Society in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean*, (Oxford: Hadrian Books, 2013), 49-57

Whitby, M. “Armies and society in the Later Roman world”, in Cameron, A., Ward-Perkins, B. & Whitby, M. (eds.) *The Cambridge ancient history volume 14: Late Antiquity: Empire and successors, AD 425-600* (Cambridge University, 2001), 469-496

---------- “The Army, c. 420-602” in Cameron, A., Ward-Perkins, B. & Whitby, M. (eds.) *The Cambridge ancient history volume 14: Late Antiquity: Empire and successors, AD 425-600* (Cambridge University, 2001), 288-313

White, S. D. “The politics of Anger”, in Rosenwein, B. H. (ed.), *Anger’s Past: The social uses of emotion in the middle ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1998). 127-152

White, S. D. “Peace in the feud revisited: feuds in the peace in medieval European feuds”, in K. Cooper & C. Leyser (eds.), *Making early medieval societies: Conflict and belonging in the Latin West, 300-1200* (Cambridge University, 2016), 220-243

Whittaker, “Landlords and Warlords”, in J. Rich and G. Shipley (eds.), *War and Society in the Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1993), 227-302

Whittaker, C. M. *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1994)

Wickham, C. *Framing the Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800,* (Oxford University, 2005)

Widom, C.S. “The cycle of violence”, in *Science* vol. 244, iss. 4901, (1989), 160-166

Wightman, E. M. *Gallia Belgica,* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1985)

Wilkes, J. “Provinces and Frontiers”, in *Cambridge Ancient History* vol. 12 (Cambridge University, 2005), 212-268

Williams, P. “Illicit markets, weak states and violence: Iraq and Mexico”, in *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 52, iss. 3 (Sep. 2009), 323-336

Wood, I. “Disputes in late-fifth and sixth-century Gaul: some problems”, in Davies, W. and Fouracre, P. (eds.) *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe*, (Cambridge University, 1986), 7-23

Wood, I. “The secret histories of Gregory of Tours”, in *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire*, vol. 71, no. 2 (1993)

---------- *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (New York: Longman, 1994)

---------- “Jural relations among the Franks and Alamanni”, in I. Wood (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge 1998), 213-238

---------- “‘The Bloodfeud of the Franks’: a historiographical legend”, in *Early medieval Europe* vol. 14, iss. 4 (2006), 489-504

---------- “Administration, law and culture in Merovingian Gaul” in Noble, T. F. X. (ed.) *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (New York 2006), 358-376

---------- *The modern origins of the early middle ages* (Oxford University, 2013)

Wormald, P. “‘Inter cetera bona...genti suae’: Law-making and peace-keeping in the earliest English kingdoms”, in *La Guistizia Nell’Alto Medioevo*, vol. XLII (1994)

---------- “Lex Scripta and Verbum Regis”, in P. Wormold, *Legal culture in the early medieval West*, (London 1999), 1-43

---------- “The *Leges Barbarorum: law and ethnicity in the post-Roman West”*, in Goetz, H.-W., et al. (eds.), *Regna and Gentes: the Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World* (Transformation of the Roman World, 13, Leiden, 2003)

Zimmerman, M. “Violence in Late Antiquity Reconsidered”, in H. A. Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 343-358